

PUPPETRY AND LITERATURE



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Puppetry and Literature

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PUCK PUPPET THEATRE | FACULTY OF THEATRE AND FILM

PUPPETRY and LITERATURE

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PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

2023

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ISBN 978-606-37-1950-9

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Table of contents

Spatial usage of the fair puppetry paravan (folding screen)	7
<i>Dezső Bonczidai</i>	
The shadows of the puppeteers.....	31
<i>Anca Doina Ciobotaru</i>	
The new theatre for children and its' road to relevance	45
<i>Ana Cucu Popescu</i>	
The typology of texts used in Czech puppet theatre –	
The past and the present	55
<i>Katerina Dolenská</i>	
Dramaturgy Without Text.....	63
<i>Louise Lapointe</i>	
The theatre director, creating and teaching. A provocation reflecting on puppet theatre directing, the director's tools, teaching and training philosophy in contemporary puppet theatre.....	69
<i>Irina Niculescu</i>	
How to write for kids these days – considerations on children literature.....	79
<i>Raluca Sas-Marinescu</i>	

Theatre for toddlers; educating the visual and sound perception	85
<i>Varga Ibolya</i>	
Puppetry at the crossroad of arts	95
<i>Daniela Vartic</i>	
The architecture of fairytales.....	101
<i>Leonard Vartic</i>	
Specificity of writing for puppetry.....	107
<i>Sun Wook Hyun</i>	

Spatial usage of the fair puppetry paravan (folding screen)

DEZSŐ BONCZIDAI

Puppeteer of the *Ariel Youth and Children's Theater*, and assistant professor of the University of Arts Târgu Mureş. Finished his doctorate in the field of theater science at the University of Arts Târgu Mureş Doctoral School in 2021. His field of study is the tradition of Hungarian fair puppetry; more precisely the history of Hungarian fair puppetry, the puppetry activities of the Korngut-Kemény family, and the fair puppetry shows that were played in the more conventional spaces of the Transylvanian puppet theater halls.

Abstract. In fair puppetry play, and especially for the shows that are played with hand-puppets, the paravan helps create the essential aesthetic values of the play, and the symbiosis of the puppeteer and puppet as well. The relationship and connection between puppet and puppeteer, animator, and animated object is a cardinal element in puppetry aesthetics. Through the chosen puppet technique, the puppet and puppeteer's relationship – a large spectrum of possibilities arise, which are flourishing quite well in contemporary puppetry: subordination, the puppet, and the animator receive different roles, or play the same role together, the visual signs of the duplication (puppet and puppeteer have the same, of similar costumes), etc. – have an effect on the dramaturgy, and the play as a whole. This presentation focuses on the particularities of the fair puppet show paravan, emphasizing the characteristics of spatial usage. The particularities of the fair puppet shows are defined through the concept of the classical puppetry paravan, making a note of the non-conventional space in which the show is played. Furthermore, we will present the paravans used in Hungarian and Romanian fair puppet shows through examples, while trying to find the answer to the question: did the paravan's function change throughout the years in the conventional puppetry space?

Keywords: fair puppetry paravan, spatial usage, Hungarian and Romanian fair shows.

During in-depth interviews and conversations in the 20th century, the typical use of the phrase “life behind the folding screen” can be observed. Puppeteers were generally described as spending their lives behind the folding screen, often ‘anonymously’. Thanks to the conquest of space by the open play, the moving and the moved object are visible on stage at the same time, and this has generated a parallel change in the use of space in puppet theatre. The impact of the open play has made the stage of the puppet theatre not only a place of the folding screen and mediation, but also a space of the acting.

The folding screen was/is used in both the Hungarian and Romanian traditions of fairground hand puppetry. From the rudimentary structures, think of the Romanian fair hand puppet tradition, where a sheet was sometimes stretched out, we can also find folding screens allowing the simultaneous use of complex puppetry techniques. Plays originally performed in non-conventional puppet theatre spaces have also gained a place on the stages of conventional puppet theatres. Of course, in most cases, they cannot be regarded as fairground hand puppetry plays, but the influence of the fairground hand puppetry tradition is undeniable in their characterization, plot, use of folding screens and play language.

Like a traditional folding screen used in a conventional puppet theatre space, a folding screen used in a non-conventional puppet theatre space, due to its closed structure, obscures the puppeteer and the animation processes. It undeniably restricts the puppet’s lateral and depth movement and scenic possibilities. An essential characteristic of the folding screen in the unconventional puppet theatre space is that it separates the playing space from the spectator space, simultaneously determining what and how much of the performance the spectator sees. The folding screen used in a fairground puppet show directs the audience’s attention to the puppetry, gives the puppeteers the

psychological freedom of concealment, but by its very structure represents enclosure. The key means of unlocking this enclosure through the folding screen can be found in the way the puppets are brought to life, in the way they move and in the diction of the puppeteer. The height of the folding screen used in fairground puppetry can be standardized, or individualized for the puppeteer. In fairground puppetry, including stories performed with hand puppets, it contributes to the development of an essential aesthetic principle of the play, the symbiosis of puppet and puppeteer. The relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer, the animated and the animator, the moved and the moving, is one of the cardinal elements of puppet aesthetics. The choice for puppet technique, the system of the relationship between the animator and the animated, which opens up a wide range of possibilities that have found fertile ground in contemporary puppetry: under- and overlapping, the puppet and the animator playing separate roles or playing the same role together, visual signs of duplication (puppet and animator wearing the same or similar costumes), etc., have an impact on the dramaturgy and the performance. A characteristic and specific mechanism of the fairground puppetry is that the relationship between the moved and the mover can be reflected as a common story of development. The development of a deep and eclectic symbiosis between them requires a different attitude on the part of the puppeteer and, typically, a longer time span.¹ The symbiosis between Henrik Kemény and Vitéz László is an iconic example in the history of Hungarian fairground hand puppetry. In the first half of this paper, we discuss the symbiosis between them and the use of the folding screen in contemporary Vitéz Laszló performances. In the second part, the folding screen use of the conventional puppet theatre space is examined in the light of the performances of Vitéz Laszló and *Paprika Jancsi* presented in Transylvanian puppet theatres.

¹ BONCZIDAI Dezső, „Mérföldkövek a Vitéz László-bábfigura keletkezéstörténetében”, *Theatron* 15, 3. sz. (2021): 102-116, 103-104.

The symbiosis of the puppeteer and the puppet

Throughout his creative career, Henrik Kemény has performed the family's plays of *Vitéz László* for decades. The Henrik Korngut Kemény's model – and playing style, his attitude towards family tradition – within the generations we find striking dramaturgical changes in the *Elátkozott malom*. At the same time, his play was also respectful to the current needs of the audience, the experience of Ligeti's nonconformist attitude to life and the search for a form of expression that is closest to his artistic habitus are among the factors that determined the symbiosis between Henrik Kemény and *Vitéz László*. Henrik Kemény performed without a folding screen when he was enticing an audience, while *Vitéz László* typically used a simple, unmarked folding screen to perform his plays. He did not vary the different puppet techniques within the performances - with the exception of the performance of *Vitéz László csodaládája*, where he also used a rod-structured puppet - nor did he extend the space of the play with a folding screen. His artistic habitus, his symbiosis with the puppet figure of *Vitéz Laszló*, and the elements of the mechanism of action of *Vitéz Laszló* performances have been elucidated by several authors.² A common intersection is that they have captured the particular relationship between the mover and the moved. The symbiosis between the puppeteer and his puppet is approached from the perspective of the hand puppet, drawing on the theoretical work of Pierre Blaise to examine the impact of different puppet structures on the relationship between mover and moved.

According to Pierre Blaise, the most striking difference between the actor and the puppeteer is the double space of the puppet stage. Keeping in mind the body position of the puppet and the puppeteer, the author has defined five positions: below, above, in front, the player can hide in the figure and moving from a distance.³

² Ld. BALOGH Géza, „Egy élő hagyomány”, *Criticai Lapok* 14, 1. sz. (2005): 1–2. Ld. FEKETE Anetta, „Bábszínház a változó világban”, *Szcenárium* 6, 9. sz. (2018): 13–20. Ld. BÓTA Gábor, „Nyugdíjas« kabaré”, *Criticai Lapok* 7, 10. sz. (1998): 15–16.

³ Pierre BLAISE, „Jegyzetek a művészeti bábszínhásról”, ford. MOLNÁR Gabriella, *Art Limes* 15, 3. sz. (2013): 43–52, 44.

The five positions oblige the puppeteer to simultaneously dominate a real space - this is the space in which the puppeteer is located and in which the puppet moves - and a virtual space - this is the space in which the puppeteer and the puppet's actions are created - resulting in the double space of the puppet theatre. Pierre Blaise also mentions a third space, in which the audience is seated, and which forms a dynamic system simultaneously with the double space. The body positions of the puppeteer and the puppet can give rise to five forms of movement, which will affect the system of relationships between them: puppet movement from below, puppet movement from above, puppet movement from behind, puppet movement from within and puppet movement from a distance. In the first case, the energy of the puppet, expressed by its appearance and movement, seems to outweigh that of the puppeteer. As Pierre Blaise observed, it is often the case that the puppet tries to escape from the hands of the puppeteer, the puppet offers the illusion of independent life. During the second position, the energy of the puppeteer is dominant; the puppet appears as a symbol of the puppeteer or the role. When the puppet moves from the back, the energy of the puppet and the puppeteer are at the same level, resulting in a balanced way of playing. The ideal body position can be defined as puppet movement from the inside: "the puppeteer breathes life into inanimate matter in an almost miraculous way."⁴ In contrast, he saw the four other modes of play as positive possibilities. In the last case, puppet movement is performed from a distance, which breaks down the process of movement into its elements. The five possibilities of play can overlap and intersect, and can also be linked to the five forms of movement and to all types of puppets.⁵

In the case of hand puppets, the movement is generated by the puppeteer's fingers and is direct. It is undeniable that the puppet's movement is limited, but Cristian Pepino argues that its 'elementary' nature counteracts the disadvantages of the puppet technique. The puppeteer, in describing the structure of the hand puppet, points out that, from the point of view of tradition, the positions of the

⁴ BLAISE, „Jegyzetek...” 50.

⁵ BLAISE, „Jegyzetek...” 50.

puppeteer's fingers inside the puppet body differ, which can affect the puppet's mobility: "Some people hold the puppet's head with their middle finger, some with their index finger and some with two or three fingers."⁶

Based on the theory presented by Pierre Blaise, a characteristic feature of the symbiosis between Henrik Kemény and *Vitéz Laszló* is that the puppet never outgrew its mover. The relationship between them is characterized by complementarity, the puppet figure representing the mover. Terka Láposi defined the basis of this symbiosis in the function of the puppet as a substitute for the human being, in which Henrik Kemény conveyed his own vision of the world through *Vitéz Laszló*.⁷

This is confirmed by the fact that in the performances we do not find any mispronunciation or verbal expression in which *Vitéz László* directly or indirectly addresses his director. The puppet does not defy the puppeteer, as in the case of some of the *Punch* or *Vasilache* players.⁸

Robert Leach, examining the structure of Joe Green's performance of *Punch*, describes the final scene of the play, when *Punch* also defeats the top mover. *The Crocodile* swallows *Punch*'s stick, indicating that the stick is vulnerable but the protagonist is not. *Punch* asks the mover for a new stick. The mover refuses to give him a new stick, begging the puppet to continue the performance. *Punch* again asks the mover, who denies his request. The protagonist throws a tantrum, demanding another stick until the mover gives up a short, thick stick. *Punch* takes it, looks at it, but finally throws it away. He demands another stick from the mover, they argue again, and finally he offers up a long, thin stick. *Punch* drops the stick, demands another stick, and as if to attack the mover. The mover calls on him to behave because he is the boss here, and *Punch* attacks him. First a shirt, then a pair of trousers, finally a pair of

⁶ Cristian PEPINO, *Az animációs színház technikája*, ford. BARABÁS Olga (Marosvásárhely: Marosvásárhelyi Színházművészeti Egyetem, 2010), 72.

⁷ LÁPOSI Terka szerk., *A Kemény Bábszínház Képeskönyve. Korngut Kemény Henrik színházteremtése* (Kecskemét: Korngut-Kemény Alapítvány, 2015), 11.

⁸ Ld. BONCZIDAI Dezső, „Vasilache, a román vásári kesztyűs bábjáték hőse”, *Theatron* 16, 1. sz. (2022): 64-81.

underpants fly from behind the folding screen, *Punch* sums up a little tired but triumphant, who is in reality the boss. Proving that he can transcend the limitations of his own world, his puppet stage.⁹

The use of folding screens in contemporary Vitéz Laszló plays

Henrik Kemény's *Vitéz László*, the play tradition of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty, has been known to generations and is a point of reference for the puppetry profession. Dániel Takács and Zsombor Barna's *Vitéz László* plays articulate a different way of relating to the play, yet they share a common intersection with the family tradition that is known through Henrik Kemény's play. However, it is important to underline that in these performances we can already discover the layering of influences. In addition to Henrik Kemény's playing style, the impulses of János Pályi's fairground hand games or the incorporation of new fairground hand characters are equally important creative elements in the staging.

The performance of Dániel Takács, directed by Géza Kovács¹⁰, is based on the *Elásott kincs*, *Vitéz László csodaládája* and the *Krokodill* etude. Dániel Takács's *Vitéz Laszló* was also sent away from home by his grandmother. During the grandmother's sentences, the puppeteer's voice inflection changes, and Henrik Kemény did not imitate the female voices in his play. Zsombor Barna's¹¹ *Vitéz Laszló* is also sent away by his grandmother to find a suitable mate.

The two puppeteers have a different playing space, Dániel Takács uses a classic closed folding screen, combining blue, red, green and yellow. In front of the folding screen is Zsuzsa Lehőcz, who provides live musical accompaniment.

⁹ Robert LEACH, „Punch and Judy and Oral Tradition”, *Folklore* 94, nr. 1. (1983): 75–85, 78.

¹⁰ *The title of the performance*: Vitéz László – Az elásott kincs. *Stage director, author*: Kovács Géza. *Stage designer*: Boráros Szilárd. *Composer*: Takács Dániel. *Musical accompaniment*: Lehőcz Zsuzsa. *Played by*: Takács Dániel.

¹¹ *The title of the performance*: Vitéz László menyecskét keres. *Stage director*: Barna Zsombor. *Author*: Markó Róbert. *Puppet designer and scenographer*: Horváth Márk. *Puppet maker*: Kiscsák Éva. *Consultant*: Tatai Zsolt. *Composer*: Nyitrai László. *Background*: Barnáné Varga Márta. *Played by*: Barna Zsombor.

The stage design of the performance reconstructs the first folding screen illustrations. Zsombor Barna uses a folding screen with a more open structure as a playing space. The stage design in Dániel Takács' performance is similar to the stage design of Korngut-Kemény's the *Elásott kincs*. The two clowns in their play only incorporate the inn and the pit. In the performance of the *Vitéz László menyecskét keres*, the backdrop is modified when the scene is changed, using minimal set elements. During the plot, the chest and the mill appear on the plane of the folding screen.

In the language of the performance, we find the word inflections, misinterpretations and puns familiar from Korngut-Kemény's play tradition. His language is clear, entertaining and easy to understand, but Zsombor Barna's performance lacks this clarity, but as we saw with the text of the fairground hand games, these texts change according to the audience's feedback. *The story of Vitéz László and Vas Juliska* was further developed by Zsombor Barna, who also included *Henrik Kemény* in the performance. In his play *Vitéz László Angliában*, *Vas Juliska* and *Vitéz László* have a child, but the parents cannot agree on a name. *Vas Juliska* wants to name him *Henrik*, *Vitéz László*, of course, *László*.¹²

This approach is echoed by other artists, Zsolt Tatai's production of *Vitéz László vándorúton*¹³ features the puppet figure of *Henrik Kemény*, who is carving a puppet. He wants to take the finished puppet to his grandmother, but he doesn't know what name to give the figure. In the final scene of the performance, *Henrik Kemény* and *Vitéz László* move on together.¹⁴ After the performance, Mariann Fabók comes out from behind the screen and commemorates *Henrik Kemény* in a short history of puppetry. János Pályi thanked *Henrik Kemény* in the

¹² The title of the performance: *Vitéz László Ángliában*. Stage director: Barna Zsombor. Author: Markó Róbert. Puppet designer and scenographer: Horváth Márk. Puppet maker: Palya Gábor. Consultant: Tatai Zsolt. Composer: Barnáné Varga Márta. Played by: Barna Zsombor.

¹³ The title of the performance: *Vitéz László vándorúton*. Adaptation based on the text from *Kemény Henrik*: Tatai Zsolt. Puppets: Tatai Veronika, Kiscsák Éva, Tatai Zsolt. Music: Teszárék Csaba. Played by: Tatai Zsolt.

¹⁴ Zsolt Tatai performs this version only at festivals for professionals, because in his experience, children's audiences did not understand the scene. „*Vitéz László a Bábszíntérben*”, accessed on: 2021. 06. 13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKJcumMgMb4&t=7s>.

introduction to the performance for having bequeathed the puppet character *Vitéz László* to us.¹⁵

A much more complex and unanswered question remains how the creator finds his own means of expression, how much he allows the puppet figure of *Vitéz László* to evolve with him. Throughout his creative career, Henrik Kemény has played the show for a lifetime, embracing the traveling lifestyle. Furthermore, as János Pályi says, an important part of training as a puppeteer is to learn about the fairground hand puppetry.¹⁶

Puppet theatre representations of *Vitéz László* and *Paprika Jancsi* in Transylvania

Among the Transylvanian puppet theatre representations of *Vitéz László* and *Paprika Jancsi*, we present the use of the folding screen in the performances: *A csepűrágó* directed by Pál Antal, Ildikó Kovács's *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai* from Oradea and Cluj and *Szent László csudatettei*. These productions bear the influence of the conditions of contemporary dramatic theatre. The one- or two-person play has typically expanded, the tools for interacting with the audience have changed, and the space of the puppet theatre has become not only a space for screening and mediation, but also a space for acting.

A csepűrágó

Pál Antal staged *A csepűrágó*¹⁷ in 1998, and his character of *Paprika Jancsi* combined the naivety and naughtiness of a child with the qualities of a fairground

¹⁵ Zsolt Tatai performs this version only at festivals for professionals, because in his experience, children's audiences did not understand the scene. „Vitéz László a Bábszíntéren”, accessed on: 2021. 06. 13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKJcumMgMb4&t=7s>.

¹⁶ SÁNDOR L. István, „»Szükség van erre a harsány kis fickóra« Pályi Jánossal beszélget Sándor L. István”, *Ellenfény* 20, 8. sz. (2015): 33–38, 34.

¹⁷ The title of the performance: *A csepűrágó*. Premier: 1998. 04. 08. Stage director: Antal Pál. Venue of the premier: Marosvásárhelyi Ariel Ifjúsági- és Gyermekszínház. Authors: Jan Wilkowski és Kemény

puppet. In the female puppeteer's voice and puppet movements, the loudness, gluttony and helpfulness of the fairground puppeteers can be found. In her first appearance on stage, the puppet frightens the policeman who is trying to chase away the *Csepürágó*, who is asleep on the bench.

The interaction between the two articulates the multi-layered, in a unique form of puppet theatre production. The *Csepürágó* is played by an actor, while *Paprika Jancsi* is brought to life by a female puppeteer, yet a symbiosis is created between them. This is reflected in the spatial regulation between the puppet and the live actor, when the policeman leaves and *Paprika Jancsi* reappears, the *Csepürágó* turns towards *Paprika Jancsi*. An intimate distance is revealed between the live actor and the puppet, and during the dialogue between the two, the audience sometimes sees the side view of the *Csepürágó*'s face, due to his body position. The live character turns his whole body towards the puppet, and the physical touch between them also reinforces the intimate connection.

Pál Antal has disrupted the hegemony of the homogeneous puppet theatre form and uses an improvised folding screen for the scene. *Paprika Jancsi* appears on the upper support of the bench, while the live actor sits on the bench. *Paprika Jancsi*'s mover remains concealed, and this concealment is provided by the black fabric used for sleeping and the red cape. It follows the rules of pure puppet theatre animation. The red cape reinforces the visual transition of the live actor into the role of narrator in the second half of the performance. By using the tracking light to illuminate the play of the two, the rest of the puppet theatre space is dimly visible to the audience. After the dialogue, they jointly construct the folding screen for the performance of *A csepürágó* from two advertising poles placed in the puppet theatre space.

The folding screen is built in the open, in front of the audience, without breaking the rhythm of the performance. The director did not use the classic

Henrik. *Dramaturgy*: Antal Pál. *Scenography*: Horváth Ödön. *Music*: Hencz József. *Technical director*: Haller Sándor. *Puppeteers*: Puskás Győző (*Csepürágó*), Nagy László (*Rendőr*), Molnár József (*Polgármester*), Szőlősi Péntes Szilárd (*Bíró*), Vilhelm József (*Lufi*) énekhangja Dull János, Bartha Gyöngyvér, Zsellér Enikő (*Torma Rózsi*), Kozsik Ildikó [Novák Ildikó] (*Paprika Jancsi*), Zsellér Enikő (*Krampusz*).

fairground folding screen for these scenes either. He has used a lowering system to place the puppets at eye level and keep the puppeteers hidden. After the playing area is built, the space is symbolically divided. The live actor is positioned in the space in front of the folding screen, the puppets in the screened play space.

The Csepűrágó has additional tasks to perform for *Paprika Jancsi*, before which he places the box on the plane of the folding screen. In this scene, *Vitéz László csodaládája* by Henrik Kemény is included, a figure of the devil appears, and three puppets are used to represent him.

The staging reflects the prevailing stylistic trends and play practices of the period, the dissolution of the homogeneous puppet theatre form, the influence of the fairground puppetry, but the fairground hand play tradition does not become the dominant play style.

Ördögverő jóbarátok

Ildikó Kovács' directing practice reflects the spirit of the integrity of fairground puppetry. The integrity of the fairground puppetry encompasses the trivial aesthetic principle of the play, its type figures, its narrative schemata and its handling of the screen. In addition to the fairground hand play within the genre, he also consciously applied the techniques of mime and marionette in his directorial formal language. The incorporation of the genre's tools and effects was determined by the director's concept of the performance. In the performance *Karnyóné, vagyis a vénasszony szerelme*¹⁸, directed by Ildikó Kovács, we primarily refer to the director's formal language of finding the human puppet. In addition

¹⁸ *The title of the performance: Karnyóné, vagyis a vénasszony szerelme. Premier: 1975. 03. 20. Stage director: Kovács Ildikó. Venue of the premier: Kolozsvári Állami Bábszínház. Company: A kolozsvári Állami Bábszínház magyar tagozata. Author: Csokonai Vitéz Mihály. Composer: Vermes Péter. Dramaturge: Kovács Ildikó. Costume designer and scenographer: Botár Edit. Sculptor: Wallner Günther. Actors: Péter János (Karnyóné), Balló Zoltán (Samuka), Bothos Júlia (Boris), D. Szabó Lajos (Kuruzs), Benedek Dezső (Lázár, Karnyó), Jobbág Sándor (Lipittlotty), Koblcska Kálmán (Tipp Topp), Sigmund Júlia (Tündérfi), G. Ferencz Éva, Jakab Ildikó, Pillich Erzsébet, B. Laczka Zsuzsa (Tündérek). NOVÁK Ildikó, „A nagyasszony Karnyónéja”, in *Erdélyi magyar színháztörténet*. Philther – elemzések, szerk. JÁKFALVI Magdolna, KÉKESI KUN Árpád és UNGVÁRI ZRÍNYI Ildikó, 139–152 (Bukarest – Marosvásárhely: Eikon – UartPress, 2019), 139.*

to the exploration of the visual doubling of the puppet and the puppeteer, the performance also features the fairground imagery. The director briefly notes in the *Workshop Diary - Notes*, “We sneak fairground mimesis into the performance through the display of the account and Lázár’s nonsensical politicization.”¹⁹

A broad spectrum of these performances emerges from her career as a director, and the following highlights the play *Ördögverő jóbarátok*²⁰, staged at the Hungarian Artistic Department of the Puck Puppet Theatre in Cluj.

One of the recurring directorial concepts in the staging of fairground hand plays is the synchronous inclusion of folk puppet heroes from different nations in the performance, which is expressed in different ways of diversity. She staged his first fairground performance at the Puck Puppet Theatre in Cluj-Napoca in 1983 under the title *Sose halunk meg*, but it cannot be reconstructed due to lack of documentation. The emblematic performance of the staging of this theme was *Purgateátrium avagy ördögszarván angyalsipka*²¹ at the Ciróka Puppet Theatre. In parallel with the performance of *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, striking differences emerge in its staging, and in this context the director’s approach is articulated, which draws on the genre diversity of fairground puppetry, places the habitus of the puppet actor at the centre of the puppet performance and reflects on current socio-political problems.

The *Purgateátrium* performance’s folding screened playing space is created by folding three separate screens together and then splitting them open.²² The *Ördögverő jóbarátok* places the puppet heroes of the two nations in the same playing field, emphasising the particular problems of Transylvanian

¹⁹ KOVÁCS Ildikó, „Műhelynapló – Jegyzetek”, *Korunk* 37, 6. sz. (1978): 472–474, 473.

²⁰ *The title of the performance*: Ördögverő jóbarátok. *Premier*: 2005. 09. 17. *Adapted for stage and directed by*: Kovács Ildikó. *Venue of the premier*: Kolozsvári Puck Bábszínház. *Visual designer*: Dan Frăticu. *Music*: Kötő Áron. *Puppeteers*: György László (Vitéz László, Vasilache, Gábor, Kicsi ördög, Közördög, Öreg ördög, Lacika), Kötő Áron, Vincze Tímea (Márioara, Barbie babák).

²¹ *The title of the performance*: Purgateátrium avagy ördögszarván angyalsipka. *Premier*: 1992. *Stage director*: Kovács Ildikó. *Venue of the premier*: Ciróka Bábszínház, Kecskemét. *Puppeteers*: Pályi János, Kovács Géza, Rumi László. FEKETE Anetta, „Tradíció és invenció Kovács Ildikó bábrendezői formanyelve”, *Színház- és Filmművészeti Egyetem*, hozzáférés: 2021. 06. 17, http://szfe.hu/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/DI_Fekete_Anetta_DLA_dolgozat.pdf.

²² FEKETE, „Tradíció...”.

multicultural society. In addition to the creation of a folding screened playground, the dramaturgy and the visual design of the puppets represent the removal of the mechanisms of repression, subordination and assimilation, and the socio-political stratification of peaceful accommodation and coexistence.

The visual language of the performance reflects this multicultural ethos, with the floral patterned folding screen, inspired by elements of Romanian folk art, in perfect harmony with the red costume of *Vitéz László* and *Vasilache*, who are in their red braid ornaments. For Ildikó Kovács, the multicultural Transylvanian milieu both provided strong roots and manifested itself in a humanistic vision: “I couldn’t leave here. I didn’t want to. I had the feeling that my roots are in Transylvania. It’s an analogy, but I couldn’t put it any other way. I got a lot from Transylvania (...) First of all, the love of nature, of being part of nature and being part of it. That three nations live here together, the richness and beauty of it. We are all richer for it, I think.”²³

This people-centred approach was applied to working with the puppeteers, casting, rehearsing the play, and in the puppet mover – puppet character pairing and moulding. In the *Purgateátrium* production, János Pályi was cast as *Vitéz László*, Géza Kovács as *Vasilache* and László Rumi as *Kasperl*. In the *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, not only is the plane of the folding screen shared, but the same actor brings the characters of *Vitéz László* and *Vasilache* to life. László György’s vocal talents and his qualities as a puppeteer were found suitable for him to portray the characters, and this conscious choice culminated in the complexity of the performance’s theme. The puppet-mover’s voice training and diction do not follow Henrik Kemény’s playing style, the more mature male tone of voice pushes the character’s age to the threshold of adulthood.

László György’s folding screen is complemented by a female player, the *Barbie* dolls are brought to life by Tímea Vincze. The Barbie dolls are not classic fairground hand puppets, the dolls’ visual features break the traditional stage

²³ KÖLLŐ Katalin. „»Csak« bábszínházi rendező”. In Kovács Ildikó bábrendező, szerk. SZEBENI Zsuzsa, 70–84 (Kolozsvár: Koinónia és OSZMI, 2008), 78.

image of the fairground hand play. The external attributes, the mechanical movement and speech of the dolls, illuminate a stark contrast.

Unlike the *Purgateátrium* performance, *Ördögverő jóbarátok* has modified the narrative patterns and added new scenes to the play. The *Purgateátrium* has condensed the performance of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty's *Elátkozott malom* into the play of *Vitéz László*. In the *Vasilache* play, the traditional narrative scheme was modified because *Vasilache* does not kill his wife. The source of the conflict between the two is also shifted to a different context, with *Vasilache* and *Mărioara* quarreling over a deal with a horse trader. In his rage, the Romanian folk puppet hero wishes the devil would take his wife. After the devil is defeated, *Mărioara* returns with a little red-headed devil, foreshadowing that the battle with the mythological creatures is not over.²⁴

In the performance of *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, *Mărioara*'s appearance breaks the calm. *Vitéz László* at first mocks *Vasilache* for being afraid of his wife, but his Romanian friend sums it up by saying that all decent men have families. In the Korngut-Kemény dynasty, unlike the play tradition of *Vitéz László*, internal motivation is displayed. The search for a wife becomes the driving force behind *Vitéz László*'s journey, while Ildikó Kovács gives the traditional fairground wandering motif a deeper meaning and purpose. *László Vitéz*, seeing *Vasilache*'s family model, sets out to find a wife.

As a viewer, we know from the beginning that, although *Vitéz László* is a real hero and, for all his excesses, a likeable character, finding a wife to suit him will be no easy task, if not impossible. For in fairground puppetry, the relationship between man and woman is typically portrayed in an extreme way. Nevertheless, *Vitéz László* sets out to find a suitable wife, the Hungarian protagonist is aided by *Lóti-Futi* and the musician, who are present as live actors.

The first two *Barbie* dolls suddenly appear and then disappear, leaving *Vitéz Laszló* gasping. When the third *Barbie* doll appears, *Vitéz Laszló* bursts out and returns with a rose. The puppet kneels down and holds out his hand to the doll. The beautiful doll ignores this gesture. Nevertheless, *Vitéz Laszló* does not

²⁴ FEKETE, „Tradíció...”.

hesitate and immediately asks for her hand. The *Barbie* doll says yes and makes her wishes clear: she wants a nice dress, a car, a villa and lots of money. He tries to convince her that she has enough beautiful clothes, a motorbike is as good as a car, a fork from wood is also a fork (*editor's note: hungarian for fork also means villa, so this represents a pun*), and that money can be replaced by fun, friends, love, family and children. The *Barbie* doll disappears when the money is mentioned, and *Vitéz László* states in form of a question that this is not the wife he wants.

Compared to the satirical portrayal of a couple's relationship, which is a portrayal of social problems, the director puts *Vasilache* and *Mărioara*'s relationship on stage in a different context. She did not follow the narrative patterns of the traditional Romanian fairground puppetry or the *Vasilache* scene in the *Purgatórium*. The conflict between *Vasilache* and *Mărioara* shifts to the "did you over-salt it or not" argument, in the heat of which the Romanian folk puppet hero wishes the devil to take his wife. The satirical portrayal of the marriage, the motif that triggers the conflict between them and the ending, when *Vasilache* kills his wife, is not transposed. In fact, when the spoken word carries a heavy meaning, he begins to search for his wife. He learns from the musician, who is positioned in front of the screen, that *Mărioara* has been taken by the devil and helps him to retrieve her by administering the instruments. The only way to defeat the Devil is with his friend's frying pan, so *Luci Feri* vows revenge against *Vitéz Laszló*. By including the depiction of the *Common Devil* on a mobile phone, when even the devils use this channel of communication, the director deliberately holds up a mirror to his adult audience.

The inclusion of Gábor, the horse trader, is an imprint of multiculturalism, reinforced by the character's voice inflection and articulation. This narrative scheme is part of the traditional *Vasilache* performances, in *Ördögverő jóbarátok* the horse trader is trying to deceive *Vitéz Laszló*. *Vitéz Laszló* is tired of walking, he does not want to continue his journey in this form, so *Lóti-Futi* suggests that he buys a horse from the horse trader. The role of the female player is not limited to brainstorming, she moves the horse in front of the folding screen, in the open.

This scene becomes an integrated unit of the folding screen's play, although the horse is placed on a different plane in relation to the horse trader and the figure of *Vitéz László*, due to the height of the player. By puppeteering in the open, the horse is visually reinforced as old and sick. *Vitéz Laszló* eventually buys the horse and, like the fairground puppeteers of other countries, is thrown from the horse's back.

After his unsuccessful search for a partner, *Vitéz László* sits sadly. There is a loud baby cry, then *Lóti-Futi* runs in with a baby. The puppeteer, appearing as a live actor, looks out of the window of the folding screen and together with *Lóti-Futi* they decide to tell *Vitéz László*. The appearance of the puppeteer as a live actor underlines the seriousness of the situation, since the fate of a defenceless orphaned child is at stake.

The folk puppeteers ask the audience for advice on how to care for the child, meanwhile Lacika disappears. In the next folding screen scene, the child Lacika appears, singing and reciting in Romanian, German and Hungarian, much to the surprise of the audience. In the *Purgatórium* performance, the puppeteers at the fair speak in their own language, in this play Vasilache and *Vitéz László* speak exclusively in Hungarian. Multiculturalism is reflected in the upbringing of the children, interpreted by the smallest of the characters.

In the performance, the characters of the two folk puppeteers have changed, from the murderous wife-beater *Vasilache* to the husband who also confronts the devil for *Mărioara*. An old adolescent with an unrestrained thirst for brawling, he has crossed the threshold of adulthood and, although he has not found a wife to call his own, he is starting a family with the help of his Romanian friends. The performance does not convey a traditional family model, reflecting and offering solutions to pressing social problems. In the last half of the performance, the single-parent family model emerges, a father raising his child, somewhat clumsily and awkwardly, who, with the support of his environment, is able to cope with the responsibility of raising a child. In the performance, Ildikó Kovács presents a clear image of hers upon childhood: "For a lifetime I have been trying to defeat it, to warn the adults that a child is also a whole person. The fact

that it is small does not mean that it is more stupid, not more reduced, not less capable, in contrary... It knows much more about life and death, which adults then forget in a hurry. The child is still a possibility. An opportunity that every society should be very careful not to spoil.”²⁵ This sentiment is most fully articulated in *Adjátok vissza Pinocchiót*, but it also permeates *Ördögverő jóbarátok*.

By reinterpreting the tradition of the two nations, the production uses the humour and tools of a fairground puppet show to address the problems of our time, which explains why it is still in repertoire today.

Interpretations of *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai*

In addition to Ildikó Kovács’s performance of *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, other Transylvanian productions have also included the synchronous inclusion of folk puppet heroes from different nations. *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai*²⁶, presented by the *Lilliput* Company of the *Szigligeti* Theatre in Oradea, features the characters of *Vasilache*, *Punch* and *Pulcinella* alongside the main character. The Hungarian Artistic Department of the *Puck* Puppet Theatre in Cluj also staged a production of *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai*²⁷, but with a different directorial concept.

In the 2011-2012 season, the *Lilliput* Company of the *Szigligeti* Theatre in Oradea presented *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai*, directed by András Kavinszki Szőke. The production is a compilation of the synchronic adaptations of the folk puppet characters *Vasilache*, *Mărioara*, *Punch*, *Pulcinella*, and the *Elásott kincs*,

²⁵ KÖLLŐ, „»Csak« bábszínházi...”, 79.

²⁶ *The title of the performance*: Paprika Jancsi kalandjai. *Premier*: 2011–2012-es évad. *Stage director*: Szőke Kavinszki András. *Venue of the premier*: Nagyvárad Színlámpa Színház Lilliput Társulat. *Puppet designer and manufacturer*: Dobai Imre. *Puppeteers*: Hanyecz Debelka Róbert (Vitéz László), Birtalan Katalin (Mărioara, Háromfejű sárkány), Lélek Sándor Tibor (Pulcinella, Első halál, Második Halál, Háromfejű sárkány), Daróczai István (Vasilache, Punch, Ördög, Háromfejű sárkány).

²⁷ *The title of the performance*: Paprika Jancsi kalandjai. *Premier*: 2018. 02. 05. *Stage director*: Vadas László. *Venue of the premier*: Kolozsvári Puck Bábszínház magyar tagozata. *Assistant director*: György László. *Author*: Demeter Ferenc. *Scenography and Puppets*: György László, Szabó Tünde. *Music*: Kötő Áron. *Puppeteers*: Griti Réka (Székely asszony, Harmadik bolond, Bíró lánya, Szomszédasszony), György László (Paprika Jancsi, Ördög, Székely gazda, Első bolond, Második bolond, Bíró).

Elátkozott malom, Vitéz László csodaládája. The playing field of the performance is the plane of the folding screen, the puppeteers stay behind the folding screen. The space of the puppet theatre remains the space of the folding screen and the mediation, it does not expand into the space of the actors' performance. The play space is created using the classic fairground folding screen, with the basic red of the frame and curtains, broken by a combination of blue, beige and black. This folding screen structure provides a limited space for the puppeteers and narrows the interior of the play area. The multi-character scenes sometimes bear the traces of this, the static background slips.

Unlike the fairground hand puppetry, the performance is interrupted by the rebuilding, but this rapid change is counterpointed by the musical effects. *Paprika Jancsi*, like *Vitéz Laszló* of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty, is sent to soften the fabric by his grandmother. During his aimless softening, he meets *Vasilache*, a peculiar substitute for the figure of the miller in the *Elátkozott malom*. There are examples of this in the text, with the dialogue between the two being based on the text of Korngut's Kemény Henrik. In this construction, *Mărioara* appears in the role of the innkeeper's wife and, unlike in traditional Romanian fairground puppetry, the wife is the dominant party. *Vasilache* hires *Paprika Jancsi* to exorcise the ghosts from the hangar. After killing the mythological figures, at *Vasilache*'s request, she teaches *Mărioara* to play the game familiar from the *Frici* scene. The *Punch* and *Pulcinella* scenes are also based on this directorial solution, incorporating the text of the Korngut-Kemény *Vitéz László* plays. *Punch* is searching for the buried treasure, which in the scene is hidden by the dragons in the depths of the cave. Similar to the case of *Vitéz László*, it is not *Paprika Jancsi*'s job to dive down for the treasure and, due to his carelessness, the dragons steal the sacks back.

The inclusion of the character of *Pulcinella* is linked to the narrative scheme of the play *Vitéz László csodaládája*, with a new interpretation. *Pulcinella*, who is looking for *Paprika Jancsi*, is lost in the chest. *Paprika Jancsi*, in search of his friend, which creates an opportunity for audience interaction, is confronted with the fact that *Pulcinella* has disappeared in the chest. The stakes of defeating

the devils are higher, but the possibility of voicing the devils, which would have made the game more sensually intense, was not used.

Paprika Jancsi kalandjai, staged at the Hungarian Artistic Department of the Puck Puppet Theatre in Cluj, like the *Paprika Jancsi* in Târgu Mures, is characterised by a fading of the fairground puppetry spirit and a focus on new content and ideas. The production was directed by László Vadas and the idea was conceived by László György, a seasoned fairground puppeteer among Transylvanian puppet actors.

The backbone of the performance is the folk tale *A furfangos székely menyecske*, with the character of *Paprika Jancsi* a combination of the figure of the knight and the fairground hand puppet characters. This is emphasized by the way the puppet is made, with the large red nose and costume evoking his kinship with the other fairground puppet heroes, and the gold-plated braid linking him to the figure of the knight. The folktale provides the framework for the performance, and three scenes inspired by folktales are built into it. In the performance, *Paprika Jancsi*, unlike the puppeteers with gloves on at the fair, is an active bystander, not a generator of events.

Staged for children specifically, the plot of *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai* is linear, easy to follow and the language is simple. In the creation of the folding screen's play space, the fairground folding screen was reimagined, with side wings added to the plane of the folding screen. The side wings of the folding screen frame the scenes, reinforcing the acting and observing behaviour of the puppet character *Paprika Jancsi*. The enclosure of the folding screen was extended with openings, thus solving the dimensional constraints of the folding screen's play space. The Transylvanian weasel's fall into the pit was made visually feasible by the window frame in the middle. The extrovertedness and permeability of the folding screen's side wings is also facilitated by the use of materials. The appearance of the female character in the puppet theatre space, which is more a weakness of the performance, also reflects the openness of the folding screen. The shortcomings of the live character's performance are compensated by the way the puppets are brought to life and the separation of the

different characters. The visual cues of the folding screen's play space represent the location of the performance. The Transylvanian carving along the top of the screen, the floral motifs inspired by Hungarian folk art elements, the depiction of sparse snow-covered mountains that vividly illustrate current social problems contribute to the multi-layered nature of the play space and the performance.

In László Vadas's direction, *Paprika Jancsi*, both in its visual presentation and in its character traits, bears little resemblance to the play tradition of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty's *Vitéz László*. The *Lilliput* Company's *Paprika Jancsi* is dramaturgically and stylistically more closely linked to the play tradition of the Korngut-Kemény family. In his vocal delivery and the liveliness of his character, *Paprika Jancsi*, played by Róbert Hanyecz Debelka, sometimes bears the imprint of Henrik Kemény's style of playing, combined with the virtuoso movement and penetrating acting of the puppeteer. The peculiar Transylvanian character of the performance can be detected at times in the exaggerated articulation of the puppeteers' 'o' sound, and in the local use of words, which is expressed in the words 'mále' and 'makaróni', as well as from the fact that instead of the 'mill' the ghosts are being evicted from a 'hangar'.

Szent László csudatettei

The production of *Szent László csudatettei*²⁸, presented by the *Lilliput* Company of the Szigligeti Theatre in Oradea, has a strong local flavour, and unlike Ildikó Kovács' play *Ördögverő jóbarátok*, it is retrospective in orientation. In *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai* as in the production of the *Puck* Puppet Theatre in Cluj-Napoca, the narrative patterns of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty's *Vitéz László* plays were not taken as a basis.

²⁸ *The title of the performance: Szent László csudatettei. Premier: 2015. 02. 08. Stage director: Diós Zoltán. Venue of the premier: Nagyvárad Szigligeti Színház Lilliput Társulat. Author: Bíró Árpád Levente. Scenography and Costume: Komlódi Judit. Music: Lászlóffy Zsolt. Puppeteers: Hanyecz Debelka Róbert (Paprika Jancsi), Daróczi István (Dödölle, Kun), Lélek Sándor Tibor (Nudli, Kun, Halál), Stefán Bodor Mária (Asszony), Birtalan Katalin (Lány), Balogh Judit (Ló), Meleg Hortenzia (Árnyjátékos), Németi Emese (Árnyjátékos), Szentpéteri Lenke (Árnyjátékos), Oláh Anikó Katalin (Asszony, árnyjátékos, ének).*

Árpád Levente Bíró combined the legend of the Knight-King founder of the town with the brash humor of a fairground puppet show. He also incorporated the figures of *Szent László* and *Vitéz László*, building the dramaturgy on the parallel. The parallel between the two *László* is articulated in the creation of the performance's folding screen playing space and the use of two different puppet techniques. The folding screen is not the classical fairground folding screen structure, the number of characters in the performance justified the use of a puppet theatre folding screen. The spaciousness of the scenic space was reduced by the use of theatre curtains.

The two different puppet techniques, shadow and hand play, separate sacred and profane space. The two different puppet techniques are used within the puppet theatre folding screen, which avoids breaking the dynamic of the performance by rearranging the space.

In the opening scene of the performance, *Vitéz Laszló* appears in his grandmother's kitchen. The background is created by means of a painted veneer panel on the two sides of the folding screen and an image projected on a screen in the middle. Insomnia strikes *Vitéz Laszló* and he goes to bed. During the dream, we become part of a historical journey through time with *Vitéz László*, through the easily decodable visual cues projected on the screen - space rocket, airplane, tank, WWII warplane, steam engine, Hungarian flag, masted ship, horse-drawn carriage, minaret, medieval town. In addition to the visual and auditory reinforcement, the shadow play is framed, providing a definite outline for the shadow play space. The time travel is complemented by the appearance of two musicians in authentic costume, with *Vitéz Laszló* asleep on the plane of the folding screen. A tracking light accompanies the musicians throughout their occupation of the space, the singing is interrupted by *Vitéz László*. The two musicians are positioned at the edge of the puppet stage, visually delimiting their own space.

The legend of *Szent László* is presented with shadow puppetry, while scenes based on elements of the fairground hand puppetry around *Vitéz Laszló* use hand puppetry. This directorial principle is consistently carried throughout

the performance, creating continuity between the two spatial dimensions in the second half of the performance. When *Vitéz Laszló* is no longer in control of the situation, unable to restrain the horse, rescue the kidnapped girl, confront an army of heathens or defeat death, *Szent László* fights the fateful battles in his place.

In the course of the performance, the two puppet techniques create different atmospheres due to their characteristic, stylistic features. The shadow play with its dreamlike imagery of visual elements creates the lyrical, sublime sounds of the performance. The two-dimensional puppets used in the shadow puppetry, are sometimes highlighted by beams of light. In some scenes, the body of the puppeteer appears. The moment of *Szent László* and the horse being tamed, is created by the light, the puppet and the body of the puppeteer. The gesture of taming is intensified by the human hand. The puppeteers in the back, while moving the puppet and singing, also take on a narrative role. The legend of the *Turda Gorge* and the conquest of *Death* are accompanied by narration, justified by the less known or obscured sequences.

Throughout the performance, *Vitéz László*'s vocabulary - for example, the Loch Ness monster, calories, fitness, sunscreen - and diction - at times using the idiomatic phonetic formations of the region's dialect - reflect the language used by children today, creating the possibility of linguistic identification.

Summary

The exponential increase in the number of puppeteers presumably determined the choice of the type of the folding screen's play space. The space of the fairground folding screens has expanded, with visual signs contributing to the multi-layered nature of the performances. The visual construction of the fairground folding screen has been redefined, becoming a unit of meaning that is easily decoded by the spectator. In the performances of the *Puck Puppet Theatre* in Cluj-Napoca, the folding screen's enclosure was solved by openings, windows and permeable materials, and the possibilities of representation were

expanded by the use of multiple layers. In three representations, the space of the puppet theatre became not only a place of folding screen and mediation, but also a space of acting.

The fairground folding screen has been replaced by the puppet theatre folding screen in two of the performances. In the production of *Szent László csudatettei*, two different puppet techniques were used within the puppet theatre folding screen. As in the case of *Paprika Jancsi kalandjai* in Oradea, the puppeteers' playing field was not extended, and only in the latter case is it true to say that the homogeneous puppet theatre form was retained.

The heterogeneity in terms of the spatial treatment of the triple context of puppeteer-puppet-folding screen culminated in *A csepűrágó*. The potential of the improvised folding screen, the puppet theatre folding screen and the open stage puppet movement were exploited simultaneously. Interaction with the audience was only incorporated during the scene with *Paprika Jancsi*. The narrative scheme of the performance of Henrik Kemény's *Vitéz László csodaládája* by the Lilliput Company of the *Szigligeti* Theatre in Oradea is also a pre-composed moment of involvement of the audience.

In an open or less identifiable form, the imprint of Henrik Kemény's playing style can be detected in the performances, most strongly in the diction of the puppeteers. In the performances, the puppets are brought to life by more puppeteers and the puppet movements are more elaborate.

The majority of Transylvanian puppet theatre representations, drawing on the tradition of the fairground hand puppetry and the play tradition of *Vitéz László* of the Korngut-Kemény dynasty, can no longer be considered fairground hand puppetry. For the performances under discussion, it is more appropriate to use the term puppet theatre performances based on fairground puppetry. Typically, the number of puppeteers is expanded, and the interaction with the audience takes place in a predetermined scene of the performance, but it is no longer an organizing principle of the performance. The possibility for improvisation has been reduced, and the response to spontaneous reactions from the audience has faded. The playing space within the fairground folding screen

has been widened, with new meanings and forms of representation. The crucial means of unlocking the enclosure of the folding screen are no longer only to be found in the interaction with the audience and in the animation, movement and diction of the puppeteer. The validity of our findings is limited to the Transylvanian performances that we have reconstructed and analyzed.

(translated by Brigitta Csog)

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The shadows of the puppeteers

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The history of puppet theatre can also be viewed as a history of those who served it in its traditional or modern forms and in doing so, putting their mark on the cultural identity of the spaces they belonged to. Even though every generation of puppeteers is a new branch in the genealogic tree of this professional family, most of them remain in the shadows, unknown, but forever present in the emotional memory of those who encountered the characters they brought to life. After all, the world of theatre revolves around a constant present. Time passes and the (more or less proud) identities of those who gave life to those characters fade out and turn into shadows; the audiences will remember that moment of escape to a fictional world, but almost never will it be interested in discovering the actors’ or director’s identities or the identities of those who built a world out of rags, wood, and paperboard.

The desire of keeping these people in our collective memory – even if only in the memory of our professional family – manifests itself (and not just in Romania) very timidly. Sometimes it seems like not even our own professional branch doesn’t seem interested in those who put their mark on the history of our art. The museums have far fewer exhibition spaces now. No one is telling young people about the “puppet chest”, the strength of the metaphor, and their role in the beginnings of Romanian theatre. Who among us still has time for beginnings? The present takes up all our time and the world acquires meaning through... us. In the hope of reactivating (at least) my professional/academic memory, I started re-reading *The*

History of Theatre in Romania – edited by RSR Academy in 1965 - not so much for the text itself, but for the footnotes gathered by Lelia Nădejde¹, with the help of which we can, at least partially, reconstruct a fragment of the interior of the puppet theatre's dowry chest.

In fact, the aforementioned researcher used information gathered from the State Archives and the Bucharest National Theatre's archives, which led to the organizing of an exhibit (in December 1976) in the former “Vasile Alecsandri” Museum of Theatre, presenting aspects of popular theatre and the beginnings of cult theatre in Moldavia. The oversized images of the three puppeteers from Vodă Calimachi's times, the basket full of puppets, and their “cage” challenged you to travel back in time, to imagine getting close to that world, which, at that time, was designed to men only.



2

Black and white, lights and shadows, long forgotten stories saved in a display case which – unfortunately – no longer exists; it's just the former website³

¹ *** Istoria Teatrului în România, vol. I – De la începuturi până la 1848, Editura Academiei RSR, Bucureşti, 1965.

² *Idem*, p. 116.

³ http://www.monumenteiasi.ro/pagina.php?v=muzeul_teatrului_national/ accesat la 18.08.2022

that reminds us of this address: “The building is an architectural monument, having been built by vornic Alecsandri in 1780. It has been restored between 1972 and 1976. The museum presents the evolution of the theatrical phenomena, from its first manifestation to present times, illustrating the main moments from theatre’s history and the contribution to its development of striking personalities (Gheorghe Asachi, Vasile Alecsandri, Matei Millo, Gheorghe Manolescu, Aristizza Romanescu, Agatha Bârsescu, Ion Sava, Victor Ion Popa, Milută Gheorghiu, Nelu Ionescu, Teofil Vâlcu): posters, manuscripts, books, costumes belonging to actors of the Iași National Theatre (Matei Millo, Barbu Lăutaru, Milută Gheorghiu), furniture pieces, the medal collection of T.T. Burada, the first editions of some translations of some plays from universal playwrights, a poster from 1837, on which it was the first time that the name “Iași National Theatre”⁴ was used. A misguided act of restitution turned the lights off in 2007; the shepherd, the sheep and the wolf took a break, resting until this day on the shelves in the storage facility full of heritage objects of the “Romanian Theatre History” museum collection, from the Romanian Literature Museum in Iași; they’re silently awaiting to rejoin those who would like to recreate the journey on Iasi based puppet theatre in another way than strictly theoretically.



5

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Ciobanul și lupul – păpuși din Colecția „Istoria Teatrului românesc” – Muzeul Literaturii Române, Iași.

Their simplicity, generated by the forms and lines of the portraits, by the specific materials and colors determine us to associate them with the puppets used by the ancient Japanese puppeteers – *Kairi* or *jujutsu* – manifest through spectacular structures like *ayatsurishibai*⁶, even since the IXth century, in the art of which the sacred and the profane have started to intertwine with time. Octavian Simu offers the following argument: “It’s hard to determine the exact moment in time that marked the beginning of puppetry. It would seem that the most rudimentary form of puppeteering could be traced to the IXth century. It is thought that this type of entertainment reached Japan from somewhere in Central Asia. (...) The shift from its sacred motivation to one more profane, from religious ritual to the show awaited by a certain audience, happened without being noticed. And so, there came to exist traveling puppeteers, in fact, they were wandering beggars, moving from here to there, stopping just to give an improvised show, in order to earn their daily food and then go on searching for their luck.”⁷ Their popularity grew in time, the statement reflected also by the fact that in the XIth century, Ōe Masafusa (1041 – 1111) wrote the paper *Kairai shiki* (*essay about the kairai puppeteers*)⁸; Octavian Simu notes “From this text, we can conclude that the puppeteers were nomadic cattle farmers, in search for better pastures, but who, at the same time, dabbled in the art of puppeteering. Their puppets were rudimentary, small, rough and only one person from the group would handle them.”⁹ At the same time, the UNIMA Encyclopaedia presents them as “nomadic hunters who live in tents and travel on horseback”¹⁰. The lack of access to primary information sources leads us to certain caution (when it comes to the status of these nomadic puppeteers), but doesn’t prevent us to acknowledge the need for a compared and integrative analysis; even though more than seven centuries had passed between Ōe Masafusa and Vasile Alecsandri (both of them belonging to the cultural and political elites), their

⁶ <https://jref.com/articles/bunraku-japanese-puppetry.100/> accesat la 24.08. 2022.

⁷ Octavian Simu – *Lumea teatrului japonez (Arta spectacolului în vechea Japonie)*, Editura Vestala, București, 2006, p. 146.

⁸ [https://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol13/iss3/ashmore.html/](https://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol13/iss3/ashmore.html) accesat la 24.08. 2022.

⁹ Octavian Simu – *op.cit.*, p. 148.

¹⁰ <https://wepa.unima.org/en/japan/23.08.2022>

writings demonstrate the need of involvement in the research and understanding of popular theatre forms. Future studies still await to be fulfilled.

The affiliation of “popular” Romanian puppeteers to the big universal puppeteer family (with strong medieval reverberations) has been fully established, but sometimes it remains eluded; more than often we are not mentioned in the academic papers or present in the museum collections. We, ourselves, seem to shy away from associating our theatrical identity with such primitive or medieval forms of the genre. Perhaps these lines anticipate new step towards the realization and reconsideration of our cultural roots; after all, the nowadays festivities celebrating cities or villages are nothing more than a modern, contemporary version of the fairs and bazaars from back in the day, that always accommodated the traveling puppeteers. The image of the three men reminds us that, even in the times of Voda Calimachi, earned their living through a lot of hard work; always on the road, in search of audiences willing to pay for their show, the fact that explains their presence around the houses of boyars and their contact with the officials of the times. Their costumes make us think of cold, unfriendly weather. Their faces were, most likely, greeted by the wind, their steps by bumps in the road, and their art by the struggle of every moment.



Vechi păpușari itineranți.

11

¹¹ Octavian Simu – *op.cit.*, p. 147.



12

And these images help us to shine a light on the similarities between the technical systems utilized and the animation techniques; Octavian Simu and Teodor T. Burada's descriptions offer up new arguments.

Octavian Simu – <i>kairaishi</i> /	Teodor T Burada – <i>Păpușile</i> /
<p>“Besides one, two or more rudimentarily constructed puppets, they would carry a wooden box, tied around their necks. The modest props carried inside the box couldn't have been too heavy. The lid of the wooden box would turn into the stage for the puppets handled by the puppeteers called <i>kairaishii</i> or <i>kugutsu</i> – <i>mawashi</i>. (...) This form of theatre was comprised of the moving of the puppets directly by hand or by handling the strings that suspended them and of the song of the puppeteer, which usually told a short story or suggested some dialog.¹³</p>	<p>“The puppet shows our primitive form of theatre, were usually held on Christmas day, showing various scenes depicting old traditions, small local scandals, or scenes making fun of social vices, taken from the public life of the realm. (...) The puppets are sculpted in wood and adorned with patches of cloth symbolizing different characters in their show, which took place in this big, wooden box, called <i>the puppet chest</i> or “<i>hârzob</i>”, that measured 80-90 cm in length, up to 50 cm in width and almost 50 cm in height. That box is covered in colored paper inside out. The floor of its interior is dressed with rabbit skin. The front part of the box has two big, glass windows and, in between them, an opening through which the puppets speak to the audience. Inside the box, there are two lit candles. A piece of colored cloth is fixed to the bottom of the box. When the puppets are called upon to put on their little show, the puppeteer rests the wooden box on two chairs and sits down behind it, looking inside the box through an opening so he can handle the puppets.”¹⁴</p>

¹² Păușari cu hârzobul – apud *Istoria Teatrului în România*, vol. I, *ed.cit*, p. 117.

¹³ Octavian Simu – *op.cit.*, pp. 146-147.

¹⁴ Teodor Burada – *Istoria Teatrului în Moldova*, Editura Minerva, București, 1975, p. 37.

Teodor T. Burada also makes a mention that shapes our perspective about the status of puppeteers and the ways that they could benefit from their art: “The puppet show starts on Christmas day and lasts until the beginning of the great fast, but it only takes place during the night.”¹⁵ A seasonal activity, not without risk or sacrifice. The conclusions and interpretations we leave up to the readers. The theme of the cultural matrix invites ample conversations, which, unfortunately, are noted within the scope of this micro-study; however, pointing out the similarities in spite of the time-lapse and the different geo-social-cultural spaces, couldn’t have been eluded.

In some cases, though, the puppeteers themselves become... characters; so that posterity receives the chance of restoring the picture of a specific way of mirroring the world. Vasile Alecsandri left for us the song of *Ion Păpușariul* (*Ion the Puppeteer*). The approach of this topic allows us to go back to those moments of patterning of the Romanian dramatic literature, accompanied by the substantiation of the studies about folklore/popular theatre under the signature of Vasile Alecsandri, Ghe. Dem Teodorescu, Lazar Șăineanu, and Teodor T. Burada; they represent not only a way of reforming the relationship to the professional identity of the puppeteers but also to our own cultural identity. The valoric scales receive metaphorical forms of expression, life becomes an essentialized kaleidoscope, with multiple masks, beyond time and space.

“The world is so full/ Of all sorts of puppets...” – and so it is to this day; the differences are determined by the reception, through which the stories receive meaning. Written two decades after the comedy *Iașii în Carnaval*, the song belongs to that series of works born from the author’s need to document an era that he considered to be “almost gone”, melted in the changes that had happened in the past three decades, that he had witnessed and was partially responsible for sparking.

The decoding of meanings can be initiated by the letters presented in the foreword of the first edition, published by Socec Press, republished in “Historical-literary landmarks”, written by Aurora Slobodeanu, included in the

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 44.

fifth volume of *Alecsandri. Comedii*, in 1984¹⁶. It is through them that we can understand the anthropological dimension of the songs: “Mirceşti, 186... Dear friend, each generation produces different natures and different characteristics worthy of the social and historical study of each era. Those serious figures are funny, grand or common, noble or stupid, beautiful or ugly, gentle or fierce, etc. Bear the stamp of their era and compose the original picture of the societies that come one after the other and transform with time. (...) The most interesting types have faded without leaving any visible trace... and it would take a profound genius to see through the veil of darkness that hides them and bring them back into the light.”¹⁷

A world in constant change, captured in his texts, like in a series of animated lithographies. The list of the best-known puppeteers (from the second half of the XIXth century) included in the volume *Animation Theatre in Romania*¹⁸ (based on the existing bibliographical resources) can help us understand their impact in those times, their spreading in the Romanian provinces and the way their art influenced the beginnings of cult Romanian playwriting. What draws our attention is the caption that accompanies the title of the song *Ion Păpuşarul*: “Sang by Mr. Luchian, on top of Iaşi Theatre”. Therefore, Vasile Alecsandri entrusted remarkable comedy actor, Nicolae Luchian, with the text in the 1864-1865 theatrical season. This information, however, opens up new questions, because, in the volume edited by the RSR Academy in 1965, it is noted: “The satirical connotations of the use of puppets determines Vasile Alecsandri to introduce the popular dramatic form in his play, *Iaşii în Carnaval* (act III, scene 8). The same playwright sketches out in one of the songs interpreted by M. Millo the fading portrait of Ion Păpuşarul.” Starting with 1855 Millo had been named manager of the Big Theatre in Bucharest (in 1871, the position will have been given to Pascaly); at some points of his career, he also held a teaching position at “The mimicking and declamation department

¹⁶ V. Alecsandri-*Comedii*, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1984.

¹⁷ *Idem*, p. 577.

¹⁸ Coordonator Cristian Pepino *Teatrul de Animaţie în România*, Teatrul Tânărărică, Bucureşti, 2018, pp. 10-13.

of the Conservatory”¹⁹, challenging activities, which only left him time to go on tour with a few shows in Iași.

We stand by the mention that ties the text to the actor, Nicolae Luchian’s interpretation – a reference point for comedic interpretations from the end of the XIXth century. The years of professional development spent in Paris (1839 – 1844) were complementary to studying within “the national school” of M. Millo – how Gh. Bariț calls it²⁰; “(...) many of the Moldavian actors, and not only them, are attracted by the artistic method practiced by M. Millo (N. Luchian, Mateescu, C. Bălănescu, Ion Lupescu, D. Drăgulici, St. Iulian, Halepliu ș.a.). (...) The multilateral actor typology is not very frequent in these times.

Among the actors who try out both the tragical and the comedic repertoire we can mention N. Luchian, D. Drăgulici and T. Teodorini.²¹ In the same work, Olga Flegont shapes an artistical portrait of N. Luchian based on information documented in the State Archives: “For some theatrical seasons on end, Luchian is the one to dictate the repertoire, the casts and the style of acting, but he does not go so far as to form actors or an acting school. These are years of artistical glory.”²² The friendship relationship between the playwright and the actor is made even stronger by professional trust and common values. The ability of Nicolae Luchian to bring to light both tragical and comical nuances, determines one to reflect upon the dramatic character being analyzed; the puppeteer is not a circus performer, but an artist who answers to society’s challenges; he observes and playfully transforms the outrage in games, sadness into a smile, subversion into a way of life.

Beyond these undoubtedly relevant aspects, the moment when this text was entrusted to be interpreted also warrants being mentioned: 1864, the year when on the 25th of November festivities were “stopped by the communal

¹⁹ <https://dosaresecrete.ro/matei-millo-lectii-pentru-generatiile-viitoare-de-actori/accesat la 23.08.2022>.

²⁰ Simion Alterescu – *Premise pentru caracterizarea artei scenice românești, în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, în vol. „Studii și cercetări de istoria artei – seria Teatru, Muzică, cinematografie”, Nr. 1, Editura Academiei RSR, București, 1966, p. 18.

²¹ Idem, pp 16-17.

²² Idem, p. 78.

authorities, just like *The Herods* for the same reason: lewdness.”²³ And just like this, *Ion Păpușarul* becomes a clear sign of protest; Vasile Alecsandri gave subversive nuances to his words. The song, just like his play, *Iașii în Carnaval* – was no longer a harmless text; it is through his works that he was defending the principles that he believed in and standing up to the censorship faced in 1845. Censorship didn’t represent an abstract concept – it was a form of action of a repressive state apparatus that had no problem sending the protesters to “the monastery” (and not on a pilgrimage!). “The Logothesis of Justice” (a consequence of the implementation of the “Organic Rulebook” in Moldavia, starting with 1832) worked as the authorities understood it to.

After three decades after the publication of the play *Iașii în Carnaval*, the author noted: “(...) it irritated mainly some of the highly placed individuals, because the work criticizes those who have a vested interest for the audience to not form a public opinion condemning their actions.”²⁴ The adaptation of this form of theatrical expression indicates not only his understanding of the impact of animation art, but also the respect he had for the puppeteers who took upon themselves the risk of exposing “the worldly puppets” – phrase that can be found both of Alecsandri’s works: “For they’re puppets, worldly puppets/ You can’t help but look at them.”²⁵

Even though *Ion Păpușarul* uses the specific characters and structure of popular shows, the ones (most likely) used by Ioan Hanganu himself, Vasile Alecsandri enhances the satirical nuances, by introducing alongside “the old puppets, passed on by parents” the list of “officials”, characters invoked in order to shape the world of the new puppets, placed in a well-defined context: “ever since that Constitution, whatever that is, us the Tătărașeni, call them *officials*. (...) The officials of today feed on their salaries, stuff themselves on the country’s budget and that’s why we call them officials.”²⁶ The list is long and still open: “And the others, and the others like the sand from the sea, and especially like the

²³ Teodor T. Burada – *op.cit.*, p. 44.

²⁴ Apud *Istoria Teatrului în România*, vol. I, *ed.cit.*, p. 222.

²⁵ V. Alecsandri, *ed.cit.* p. 35 și p. 342.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

leaves in the forest.”²⁷ A panoramic text that reminds us of the dynamic turned into colors and shadows by Bruegel, that catches a glimpse of a world, of a way of being.

Alecsandri doesn’t write treaties of theatrical anthropology, but he offers up a summary of his times, based on techniques utilized by puppeteers, filtered through a theatricality melted in the playful simplicity of folkloric texts. His discourse can bring forth the thought that some conflicts are perpetuated, carrying with them the energy of their times.

The analysis of the invoked texts can be extended, but the criteria chosen for comparison can determine the approach of multiple directions: the technique “theatre in theatre in Alecsandri’s dramaturgy, the relationship between popular theatre and cult theatre, drama theatre, and puppet theatre, etc.; this study is aimed at the protagonist. Ion Păpușarul (symbol of the puppeteers) intertwines the tradition with the need to communicate the challenges of the present. His acting is about life and not of life, born from the desire of saying and doing more than what others will allow him. He chooses to give himself the freedom to communicate through his puppet; the playfulness is turned into art, a weapon, and a form of survival. His artistic attitude was doubled by a long fight, because *Acta păpușilor* had effects up until... December 1879, after the pleas of Ioan Hangan, a famous puppeteer, and other citizens, among which, storyteller Ion Creangă”²⁸. Teodor T Burada also defended – during these times that we still very little about – the free speech of puppeteers, that wasn’t always a given. Although history offers us multiple examples, the “institutionalization” began an odd syndrome of eluding the independent puppeteer artists, who still depended in their everyday lives on the unforeseen, on contracts and clients, without being owed anything, ever.

The shadows of the puppeteers reclaim their right to not be forgotten; the immaterial patrimony of their shows seems to be without glory, but those who took it upon themselves to transmit with humor and poetry the stories of human

²⁷ *Idem*, p. 40.

²⁸ Teodor T. Burada – *op.cit.*, p. 45.

tares, transport us – beyond time, professional identity, a certain way of life – in search of a higher meaning. “The little song” shapes its meanings through the reception determined by the approach taken, by our desire to see beyond the shadows of the puppeteers. Ion Păpuşarul is not just a character, but a symbol of those who dedicated their lives to this craft. The story of the anonymous puppeteer – being censored or ignored – repeats itself in a space and time loop; the recovery of the memory of this professional history shapes identities and reflects characters. After all, their story speaks to a profession that is living in a perpetual present, under the light of metamorphosis. This return to the universe of folkloric puppeteers leads to our own selves and to something we may have forgotten we had: the infinite potential to gift stories and make beliefs about the world. The topic remains open; in unknown archives, there are still documents that are waiting to be (re)discovered so they can bring new understandings of the present.

(Translated by Ana Cucu Popescu)

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The new theatre for children and its' road to relevance

ANA CUCU POPESCU

Ana Cucu Popescu is a Romanian playwright and an alumnus of the Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca. Many of her plays have had the opportunity to be represented on stage and, in the past years, she has dedicated most of her creative efforts to writing for children's theatre and facilitating workshops to children.

Ever since graduating the Playwriting and Filmology MA at the same University, she has activated as a playwright both in state institutions and in independent theatres, her best-known professional affiliations being with the Reactor de creație și experiment and MiniREACTOR independent theatres from Cluj-Napoca.

Abstract. Unfortunately, Romania has a long history of classifying children's theatre as a secondary art form. This paper centers around my work as a playwright, the methodology developed alongside the artists at MiniREACTOR, an independent theatre collective from Cluj-Napoca, and all our efforts to change the common misconception that children's theatre is less important than theatre for adults.

The presentation is based predominantly on empirical observation and, therefore, highly self-referential, relating to what it infers to be a playwright for children's theatre in a day and age when, on the one hand, it has become very hard to compete with technology and streaming services for the attention of children and, on the other, the theatrical field still disregards this type of work as something "less than".

The paper tries to answer, both on a professional level and on a personal one, questions like: how do we stay relevant? Why do we do this work? How can we, actually, produce a shift in perspective?

Keywords: playwright for children, stories, dramaturgy, animation, puppet theatre, contemporary stage for children.

There is a lot of talk about representation nowadays everywhere in Western societies and rightfully so. Ever since I was in my second year of University I've believed that what we see on stage has to be relevant to the lives that we live NOW. It has to be relevant to the problems and issues that plague our society NOW. It needs to hold a mirror to everything that we, as humankind, are right NOW. And given these facts, the logical conclusion for me was that these beliefs should also be reflected in my work in children's theatre.

I had been conducting creative writing workshops for children for a few years when I was first called upon as a playwright for a children's show. My first experience was adapting a contemporary children's book by author Dorina-Grațiela Aolăriți for a show under the stage direction of Palocsay Kisó Kata. Working with Kata was an absolute privilege and even now I feel extremely lucky to have met her and have my first experience in children's theatre under her skillful and delicate guidance. It was after this that I decided that this is a road I would be thrilled to go down on and that it truly is a joy to put my creativity and dedication in service of such a noble art form. This first children's show in my portfolio came to life because of the determination of a few amazing people who set on creating this independent theatre dedicated to promoting contemporary theatre designed for nowadays children. The name of this magical place is MiniREACTOR.

This, conveniently, brings me to the work that I've done with the wonderful collective there, which I believe to be the most representative for the title of this speech. Firstly, I would like to note Delia Gavlițchi's contribution to the method we've developed when trying to write plays relevant to the contemporary child.

Even though the words themselves are always written by me, when it comes to how those words come to exist and them turning into a show, none of it would have been possible without Delia. It is her dream that I adhered to. She is the one

who had the drive to bring Mini REACTOR to life, to keep it alive and to make it into a safe heaven for artists that hold the same beliefs, which gravitate around the fact that theatre for children is just as important as theatre for adults and the best way to stay relevant is to communicate and connect with the children themselves.

I mentioned the first theatre show for children that I ever worked on, which was called *Harababura Roz-Albastră* (*The Pink and Blue Kerfuffle*), but what I failed to mention is how very different the work experience itself seemed to me. I was used to working on shows designed for adults and the working process had always been a bit stressful because of the egos that, us, artists sometimes hold. But for the first time in my life I was in a peaceful and relaxed work environment that made me strive creatively. This was another sign that this is the path I needed to follow.

Because the show turned out quite alright and the adaptation was to the children's liking, Delia approached me to work together on another adaptation, this time for a series of short stories by famous children's books author, Adina Rosetti. The show was to be called *Bucătăria Familiei Balaur* (*The Kitchen of the Dragon Family*). I am mentioning these two shows based on theatre adaptation because they reflected our shy first steps towards bringing modern contemporary themes on a theatre stage for children.

The *Kitchen of the Dragon* family also marked an important milestone for me: my first time working with Delia Gavlitchi as a director. As you can probably imagine, it was a very good experience since we've stayed together as a team even to this day. What we tried to do here, in regards to the text, is to mold together a few of Adina Rosetti's short stories under a singular narrative, that can be easily understood and enjoyed by children.

This is a play that we decided would be more about the struggles of modern day parents, than about children themselves. It centers around a mother and her hyperactive child and how she manages through games and storytelling to focus her child's energy towards positive goals. It turned out to be a play about patience and the type of love that makes us better human beings.

While my interest in children's theatre had been sparked some time before, while working on *Harababura Roz Albastră*, working on *Bucătăria Familiei Balaur* shined a spotlight for me on what animation theatre could mean.

Just like any amateur, I thought that animation theatre meant exclusively puppets. I didn't even know the differences between the so called "classic" puppets. I just knew what a marionette is supposed to look like. I couldn't even imagine that you could animate everyday kitchen items and bring them to life. I give this example because that's exactly what Delia did in this show. The "puppets" were spoons, forks, chopsticks, and a flower basket.

I mention this, even though one could argue it has nothing to do with my playwriting itself, because I strongly feel that the shape that a theatre show can take is also a form of dramaturgy. It's an artistic choice that can either bring the audience closer to the type of reception that the creator strives for, or it can alienate the audience even further.

I believe that using nonconventional objects as part of the animation process is a way of bringing theatre closer to children.

Despre stele (About the stars) is another project that Delia Gavlițchi and me created together at MiniREACTOR. It is also the first original play dedicated to children that I ever wrote and it was the start of our process of involving our target audience in the development of the stageplay.

The project, as most of the projects implemented by Mini REACTOR, was conceived as cumulus of activities centered around the creation of a show. Before any creative work even began to take place, we organized a series of workshops addressed to parents or legal guardians and their children. During these workshops we had to find ways to balance our need to obtain content from them (and when I say content, I don't necessarily mean written content, but something more in the lines of ideas, opinions on the topic that we were interested in) with the educational side of the activities and also with the "fun and games" that the children inevitably needed in order to decompress. We also had the opportunity to have alongside us a licensed psychologist who would observe the children

during the sessions and try to debrief them on the purposes and end goals of the activities that we had engaged them in.

The theme of the *Despre Stele* project was tolerance and, after our interactions with the children during the workshops, we came to the conclusion that the best way to make our theme come across in a children's show is to try to incorporate it in a very simple and specific situation that the children could relate to. And that's how this text came to life. The two main characters are employed somewhere up in the sky and their job is to light up the stars. They have spent eons of their time together, they are very good friends, until, one day, a conflict between the two of them appears. The play dissects this conflict in two diametrically different recollections of a fight, trying to underline the fact that every person will always view things through the lens of their own convictions, experiences, sometimes even frustrations and that only through communication and empathy can we, as people, resolve our differences.

The next show we created together at Mini REACTOR was *Tărâmul de Mijloc* (*The Middle Realm*). In regard to the work process, we took our methodology from *Despre Stele*, perfected it, and applied it in Zalău, a town where the access to theatre at that point in time was limited to say the least.

The parent-child workshops that we developed were addressed to inhabitants of Zalău only and Delia and I actually stayed in Zalău for the duration of this first step in the process. Given the fact that the theme we decided to center this project around was "diversity", we thought it to be even more valuable to hold these workshops in a small town, with less access to culture, than somewhere like Cluj, where people are more used to discussing such topics.

As I said before, the methodology of this project was very similar to that of *Despre Stele*. The final outcome was better, from my writer's perspective, because we could take the shortcomings of our previous project and perfect them this time around. Another thing that made this a better work experience overall, was the fact that for these workshops we realized we needed to work with children who are a bit older.

Just to reiterate: our first attempts to bring forward contemporary themes and topics in children's theatre were a couple of stage adaptations after contemporary children's books. This was followed by two shows based on original plays inspired by workshops involving children from our target audience. The natural progression of our methodology was to involve our audience even more in the writing process and that's how *MiniTexte* and *O gheără de ajutor* (*A paw of help*) came to fruition.

MiniTexte was a project that we developed during the pandemic. Just like everyone, we felt the need to keep in touch with our audience and this was one of the solutions that we found.

I developed a little “playwright’s handbook”, we launched a national call and children from all over the country were supposed to use the guidelines set in the handbook and send us short stories on the theme of recent events. Four theatre directors were each supposed to choose 4 of the short stories and turn them into short videos that would end up on *MiniREACTOR*’s youtube channel.

So basically, after this selection, my job was to take these short stories and adapt them in accordance to the 4 directors’ needs. This project was a real success because of two main points: firstly, because now we were communicating and working together with children from all over the country, not just Cluj or Zalău and, secondly, because the videos we were producing now had a national audience.

I, myself, enjoyed this format quite a lot, so I felt very at ease during work on our next project, *O gheără de ajutor*. For this one, we took the upsides both from our methodology for *Despre Stele* and *Tărâmul de Mijloc* and from *MiniTexte* and we molded them together, resulting in something truly special.

We started it out with a series of workshops addressed to parents and children, but what was different about these workshops was the fact that we decided to do them online (in order to be able to have participants from all over the country) and they were very much focused on the parent-child teams writing a theatre play themselves and me just giving them the guidance and tools that were necessary.

I am aware of the fact that people who facilitate workshops on a regular basis would much rather hold them in person, but I must say, I have grown rather attached to the online form of facilitating, taking into account the results that I've had ever since the pandemic situation prevented us from meeting in person.

In the wake of these workshops, 6 new theatre texts written by and addressed to children emerged. 5 of them were turned into radiophonic plays and one was selected to be the base for an outdoor show directed by Delia Gavlițchi. My responsibility, besides the guidance offered during the workshops, was to work on the selected text and make it better suited for the stage.

This year, as a peak of all our efforts to change the face of children's theatre from the past years, MiniReactor embarked on its' most ambitious endeavor yet: a show composed of 4 episodes, each with its' own playwright and director. The project's name is *Istoria copilăriei în patru episoade* (*The history of childhood in four episodes*) and it reunited 16 artists, from two different theatres (MiniREACTOR partnered up with GONG Theatre from Sibiu). I was one of the four playwrights that participated in the creation of this show and I worked on one of the episodes with director Diana Dragoș.

I believe this is a very important project because, not only did it bring together so many theatre creators to work together on a show designed for children, but it created a bridge between an independent theatre and a state institution. I feel that such exchanges and collaborations are highly necessary in regard to the common well-being and evolution of children's theatre.

Unfortunately, and I feel that this is something that needs to be said, there are very few state funded theatre institutions in Romania that appreciate the artistic value of children's theatre and make real efforts to maintain a certain level of professionalism when it comes to these types of shows. I say this with great regret, but children's shows are usually written off by these institutions with very little funding, without the willingness to pay intellectual property rights for an original play, by paying directors far less than their counterparts who work on shows for adults and by allocating far less rehearsal time for them compared to the shows for adults.

That's not to say that all state funded theatres have the same mindset. Fortunately, I feel that in the past few years mentalities have started to shift there as well. In that regard I would like to point out a couple of projects that I've had the opportunity to work on in this type of institutions.

One of them is *Mult aer pentru nimic* (*Much Air about nothing*), a non-verbal show produced by The Arcadia branch of the *Regina Maria* Theatre from Oradea. Delia Gavlitchi was the director of this show, as well. The main objects that we explored and animated there were balloons. This was a very interesting and rewarding work experience for me because I had never created a non-verbal stage play before. All of a sudden, I was at a lack of words. No, but really, it was quite a challenge to be able to convey a plotline and plot twists, to create rounded characters without being able to use my words. The common consensus was that this was quite a modern artistic endeavour both in regards to the esthetic of the show, but also its's underlining ecologist theme.

The other project that Delia and I worked on in a state theatre that I want to mention today is *Cu susul în jos* (*Upside down*), produced by Teatrul de Nord from Satu Mare. I believe this was my most "independent" work experience. I say that because I had the most free reign while writing the text and I really took advantage of that. While *Mult aer pentru nimic* was a non-verbal stage play, *Cu susul în jos* turned out to be quite the linguistic experiment for me, because I decided to have faith in the children because I trusted that they could handle this.

To better portray an upside down world and in order to underline textually the differences between it and the world we are used to, I decided that the inhabitants of the *Upside down World* would form sentences differently. It wasn't backwards, because that would have made the text unintelligible, but the words were somewhat tangled within each sentence.

This was a very interesting work experience also because the actors we worked with, with only one exception, had absolutely no experience in handling puppets.

And this conveniently brings me to my conclusions. Why do we do what we do? This is the easy question. We create theatre for children using new

dramaturgical and visual means because we truly believe that they deserve this effort, just like grown-ups.

We reached the conclusion that it's extremely important to involve the children in the creative process, because it's only with their help that we can truly find out what their areas of interest are and get in touch with their views of the world. This is how we found out we could stay relevant.

I wholeheartedly believe in theatre's educational side and in the fact that if we implant good ideas and behaviors early on in children's ways of thinking, we stand a better chance of them becoming decent adults. And God only knows we need more of those.

The typology of texts used in Czech puppet theatre – The past and the present

KATEŘINA DOLENSKÁ

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Abstract. The question of what kinds of texts were and are performed by Czech puppet theatres is not as simple as it might seem. Over the last 250 years, Czech puppetry changed substantially in many different ways, including in their repertoire. The most common model is to write plays for a specific theatre production, typically by the dramaturg or director. These texts can be adapted to fit the poetics of a different theatre group. Besides adaptations of traditional fairy tales, which are still dominant, many creators now adapt other well-known literary works or popular film and TV stories for children which are far more attractive for audiences than original work.

Keywords: play for children, dramaturg, stories, dramaturgy, animation, puppet theatre, contemporary play for children.

The oldest documents recording the existence of puppeteers who performed in the Czech language date from the late 18th century. Their performances were largely similar to the work of German puppeteers who operated in the same regions and from whom the Czechs most likely learned their craft. They were itinerant puppeteers playing with marionettes, i.e. puppets manipulated from above using a wire and strings. As their source material, they adopted many plays from live actor theatre which were performed in simplified versions. They retained the declamatory, sing-song style of stage speech common at the time, as well as the general aesthetic and design of the Baroque stage. Most characters were performed by a single actor, the head of the troupe. For this reason, most plays were heavily simplified to ensure that there are never too many characters on stage; crowd scenes do not exist and a very common feature are characterising speeches which help the audiences determine who exactly is currently talking.

In the next development stage, which started roughly in the second half of the 19th century, amateurs became the dominant force in Czech puppetry. Some were visual artists, some were teachers; they all had different interests in mind. Because most of their theatre shows focused on children, their dramaturgy changed accordingly. The puppeteers no longer performed plays about knights (like *Horia and Gloska*), spectacle shows, farces, plays about saints (*Jenovéfa, Dorota*) or very simplified tragedies from the live actor repertoire (*Faust, Don Juan*); instead, they started focusing exclusively on fairy tales. These were both variations of classic folk stories as well as original modern tales of wildly different literary quality, usually heavily didactic. Eventually, the itinerant puppeteers switched to a similar repertoire as well, because they could no longer compete for the interest of the adult audience with modern Czech live actor theatre. One of history's delightful ironies is that Kašpar (in older texts Pimprle), the popular comical character of the traditional marionette theatre who was a coarse, lazy and

vulgar servant and whose red costume with jingle bells probably derives from the court jesters of the Middle Ages, somehow become a children's hero. In the new plays, he appears as a curious friend or a naïve confused child. This was also the first time that people started writing original texts for puppets. Previously, most of the repertoire were either plays heavily adapted from a still recognisable source (such as *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe) or anonymous and collectively shared texts.

At this time, however, there was a huge demand for new plays, and the task of writing them was picked up mainly by teachers (Bedřich Beneš Buchlovan, Bohumil Schweigstill, Vojtěška Baldessari Plumlovská, Ludmila Tesařová and others) who mainly wrote variations of largely stereotypical stories about the popular Kašpárek and who often had no practical experience with puppetry. One prolific author was the physician Karel Driml who mainly wrote educational pieces stressing the importance of prevention and hygiene (e.g. *Bacilínek / The Little Germ*). These plays are largely unpalatable for modern audiences. The most successful play in this style that is still occasionally performed today (mostly by amateurs) was written at the very end of this era: *Míček Flíček* (Spotted Ball; 1936) by the prominent Czech puppeteer Jan Malík (1904–1980). One of the reasons might be that Malík decided to abandon the stereotypical Kašpárek character and wrote a play about an object: a small ball. This was not the first time that a puppet play personified an object; for example the plays of Charlotta Habersbergerová, a writer who has been completely forgotten, feature as main heroes shoes or balloons that came to life. The success of *Míček Flíček* derives from the fact that Malík essentially took the plot of the classic Czech fairy tale of Budulínek and transported it to a modern city. He also relies on repetition, which young children enjoy, and actively engages them. The premiere of *Míček Flíček* was performed in 1936 at the Loutkové divadlo Umělecké výchovy in Prague, directed by the author. Besides Malík, there were several more amateur theatre practitioners who also wrote plays at this time; many of these texts were later staged by the first professional theatres that started appearing after the Second World War (Karel Mašek Fa Presto, Václav Sojka, Zdeněk Schmoranz, Vojtěch Cinybulk and others). Today, these plays are performed only very rarely, and always by

amateurs. It should be noted that there is one phenomenon that stands completely outside the trend, which is Josef Skupa's enormously popular puppet theatre whose repertoire was based on two main marionette characters: Spejbl, the befuddled father, and his smart son Hurvínek. The theatre continues to perform to this day.

Besides fairy tales, several ambitious artistic theatre groups tried to stage classical plays of world theatre (Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, comedies by Molière and Goldoni, Elizabethan drama and William Shakespeare's plays in particular) as well as operas (*Dráteník*/Tinker), clearly with the intention to emancipate the puppet and make it equal to other forms of theatre. But this attempt to match the prestige of live actor theatre turned out to be counterproductive. The effort to achieve perfect animation and a convincing illusion of life using the repertoire of live actor theatre denied the very essence of the puppet; artists stopped searching for ways in which the puppet differs from the actor and developing its stage presence.

The next era in the development of Czechoslovak puppetry begins after the end of the Second World War with the rise of the modern professional puppet theatre, but in practical terms, very little changed at first. The new professional theatres imported the Soviet socialist-realist repertoire which placed an emphasis on verisimilitude. The search for the specifics and theatrical means of the puppet was forcibly stopped, and so was the development of the by far most prevalent style of puppet, the marionette. Everyone had to primarily work with rod puppets which shed their original Oriental style and turned into realistic depictions of people.

On the other hand, the era also had a positive effect on the emancipation of puppetry, which was recognised by the law as a form of theatre like any other. More importantly, the state followed the Soviet model and established a network of subsidised permanent theatre stages, which continue to operate to this day with stable creative teams. Another key milestone was the founding of the puppetry department at the DAMU in 1952 which trained future puppetry specialists – actors, dramaturgs, directors and stage designers.

As mentioned, Czech puppetry of the 1950s followed the style of socialist realism, which meant an emphasis on illusion. Most shows were based on fairy tales and classic Czech live actor plays (Josef Kajetán Tyl, Václav Kliment Klicpera, Alois Jirásek); while there were some purely ideology-driven, agitprop

pieces as well, they were rather rare. There was also a strong trend of performing translated plays by authors from the Eastern Bloc (Gyula Urbán, Hana Januszewska, Evgeny Schwartz and others), mainly fairy tales. The quality of new original Czech plays was greatly improved thanks to the efforts of the dramaturg, director and DAMU teacher Erik Kolár (1906–1976), who was also the Secretary of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers. He persuaded many leading writers of his time (Jan Vladislav, Ludvík Aškenazy, Milan Pavlík, František Pavláček, Václav Renč and in particular the great poet Josef Kainar) to write original plays for puppets. Many of them were staged all over the country and abroad, and for example Kainar's adaptation of the traditional fairy tale *Zlatovlánska* (Goldilocks, 1951), written in verse, is one of the mainstays of the Czech puppetry repertoire. Thanks to the richness of Kainar's lyrical verse, the play has remained a constant on Czech stages, unlike the texts written by his contemporaries. Most of the plays were written in a very conservative style, with a dominant verbal component carrying the bulk of the narrative.

Another key milestone in the development of Czech puppetry were the 1960s in which artists gradually abandoned the realistic style and the quest for the perfect illusion. Their new approach to staging and the mixing of live actors and puppets on the stage, provocative and even controversial at the time, prompted a rapid evolution of the entire field. The actors, newly liberated on the stage, gained many more options; the stage design, no longer relying on a screen, started discovering depth and utilising many more types of puppets. This variability ultimately led to more creativity. In terms of dramaturgy, the abandonment of the illusive style led to a gradual rise of original plays written by dramaturgs and directors for a particular purpose and often for specific actors. Fairy tales, however, remained the dominant genre.

The political and social thawing of the Sixties ended in 1968 with the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies and the following two decades are known as the era of “normalisation”. Because the renewed censorship paid particular attention to texts, puppeteers often chose to stick to fairy tales, which were not seen as problematic, or started relying on visual and metaphorical imagery

instead of text. Probably the strongest example is Josef Krofta's suggestive staging of Evgeny Schwartz's *To Kill a Dragon*, renamed to *Píseň života* (The Song of Life, 1985), a biting depiction of the aimlessness of life under totalitarianism. Paradoxically, the golden era of Czech puppetry, which is to a large extent associated with Josef Krofta, was a direct response to the experienced lack of freedom. Krofta's use of metaphor and meanings hidden between the lines within archetypal stories was picked up not only by the local audience, but also abroad.

The trend of writing original plays for specific theatre groups continues to this day. When Josef Krofta became the head of the Puppetry Department at Prague's DAMU in 1991, which he soon renamed to the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre, he brought with him the concept of free collective creation arising from a key theme. The text became one of several equally important components of a theatre structure, and not its starting point, as is common in interpretative theatre. Today, 30 years later, the trend of abandoning a fixed theatrical play to focus on other components of a theatrical production is still ongoing. It's particularly noticeable in student and graduate shows from KALD roughly from the 2010s onwards, in which puppets and the spoken word rarely coexist. The figurative puppet is gradually abandoned, and so is verbal text. Instead, the emphasis is placed on non-narrative associative collages, theatre of materials and object theatre.

Most of these shows are however produced by students or small and independent alternative theatres. Statutory theatres, which have certain performance criteria to meet and a public service to perform, as well as many independent groups that rely on state subsidies, continue to work with dialogic text based around a narrative or story; symptomatically, however, the text is often no longer called a play, but a "scenario". Besides adaptations of traditional fairy tales, which are still dominant, many creators now adapt other well-known literary works or popular film and TV stories for children which are far more attractive for audiences than original work.

The canon of universally accepted puppetry plays has not changed much since the addition of Kainar's Zlatovláska. One exception bucking the trend is the

work of Iva Peřinová (1944–2009), dramaturg of Naivní divadlo Liberec. Originally an actress, she became a dramaturg in the early 1990s and started writing plays directly for her colleagues. She paraphrased known stories (fairy tales and children's literature), adapted classic texts (*Putování dona Juana aneb Epidemie sevillská / The Wanderings of Don Juan, or The Epidemic of Seville*, 1985; *Alina aneb Praha v jiném dílu světa / Alina, or Prague in Another Part of the World*, 1996) but mainly wrote original plays. Her texts, even though written for specific theatre shows, can be easily reused by other theatre groups as well. Their characteristic features are a richness of vocabulary and a great sense for the theatricality of the puppet and its limits.

The current dramaturg of Naivní divadlo is her son, Vít Peřina (since 2003), and his plays also rank among the best writing for puppets today, both for adult and child audiences. Both share a fondness for exaggeration, skillfully crafted plots and a clever use of themes that support the main storyline. Many of their plays also lead to a surprising and unexpected ending. Both write very lively dialogue and like to make playful references to well-known works and historical events. The main difference is that Vít Peřina's plays tend to be more contemporary and often parody current (pop)culture (*James Blond*, 2009; *Loutky hledají talent / Puppets search for Talent*, 2012).

The search for new authors who would regularly write for puppets is however quite difficult. As mentioned, the young generation is simply not interested. There were some attempts to organize competitions where anyone could submit an original play, but these were largely unsuccessful – most of the plays were not very good and few theatres chose to use them. Another aspect is that writing plays for puppets is simply less lucrative – if only because they are performed in smaller theatres, because the more viewers see the play, the higher are the royalties. Last but not least, it's the puppets themselves who make it difficult – every type of puppet has different requirements, different specifics, different possibilities. By far the most common model is to write plays for a specific theatre production, typically by the dramaturg or director. These texts can only very rarely be adapted to fit the poetics of a different theatre group. As

the editor-in-chief of *Loutkář*, I can attest to that: while the magazine traditionally always published original new plays, we no longer do so because there simply aren't any. It seems that any attempts to publish anthologies of contemporary puppet plays or to export translated Czech plays abroad would be doomed to fail – with the possible exception of the plays by the Peřina family.

Dramaturgy Without Text

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Abstract. The specificity of writing for puppetry is not words, but rather marrying the potentials of matter, movement, sound, and maybe text, to create drama, with no less if not more impact on the observer than starting from a usual written play. Dramaturgy in puppetry can count on and rely on so many elements to convey meaning, and in such a powerful way. At the cross road of several artistic disciplines, puppetry is a complete art form, thus calling upon several of our senses, our emotional intelligence and our brain, to create, understand and appreciate theatrical propositions.

Keywords: Dramaturgy, puppetry performance, fiction, manipulation, play, storytelling.

This invitation came just a few weeks after I had the privilege to see the beautiful performance - *MIA KERMESSE*- by the Netherlands puppeteer Stefanie Claes. So, I seize this occasion to reflect on DRAMATURGY WITHOUT TEXT, which is for me an important distinctiveness of puppetry. Shows without words are common in puppetry, and through this allocution, I will present three of them, as examples of very strong dramaturgy and directing, using either abstract shapes or very realistic puppets.

First, let me stress how strange it is to have to use words to describe the topic of my allocution devoted to dramaturgy without text!.. What I want to transmit is exactly this, how can puppetry move us in a way that only acting and words cannot... I am not a scholar nor a theorist, my work in puppetry has revolved for a long time around designing and making puppets and masks, and now, for many years, it is mainly focused on programming a season and an international annual festival. Puppetry moves me, still and always. How? Why? It is not because of the literacy link. It is because puppetry makes me hear the "indicible", a French word difficult to translate with the poetry it implies... the unspeakable, the unutterable, no. Here, are some thoughts I juggled with writing this allocution.

The specificity of writing for puppetry is not words, but rather marrying the potentials of matter, movement, sound, and maybe text, to create drama, with no less if not more impact on the observer than starting from a usual written play. Dramaturgy in puppetry can count on and rely on so many elements to convey meaning, and in such a powerful way.

It is true that too often, because of these so many elements, artists put time and attention on the visual aspects of puppet theatre, and dramaturgy is left aside, leaving the spectator on his or her appetite, looking for the point... We see this lack of sense a lot, puppeteers caught up in the marvels of esthetic images, accessible new technologies and numeric devices to produce stunning effects, but often leaving us in front of a pile of tools, nails and material, not stuck together.

It is mandatory to stress dramaturgy in the training and development of our contemporary art form, flirting with new media and synthetic materials.

Far away for these technological temptations, the inspiration for my allocution is the prize-winning performance *MIA KERMESSE*, by Stefanie Claes from the Netherlands, which offers a beautiful example of a meaningful wordless “storytelling”. Using paint, almost static papier mâché figurines, and a looping recorder, Stefanie Claes unfolds before us the story of an abandoned child, raised in a circus, from the encounter of her genitors, her conception, her abandonment to her final quest for her origins. The whole performance is without words; the effect is stunning, the simplicity touching and the dramaturgy clear and thoughtful.

A critic wrote: “*There is a huge imagination behind this show, which makes words unnecessary. All Claes has to do is bend the wires from Mia’s arms to her ears to let her know that Mia is not feeling well...*

A booklet of the play, with only black ink drawings of the different scenes, ending with a citation of James Baldwin, is offered for sale after the performance. As a graphic novel of a most modest form, it allows for the charm to go on... “

All elements of *MIA KERMESSE* resonate with each other. The colorful naïve figurines, the handmade quality of the music, the circus fair atmosphere. The solitary social status of the main character is depicted with simple visual and musical means, which perfectly express the loneliness of the abandoned child and the depth of her quest for her origins. No need for words, our brain creates the internal dialogue of the character, each with our own sensitive and personal understanding, nevertheless reaching the universal one.

Thus, this performance and its originality were the spark of my reflection about the 11th art, and about the dramaturgy without words for puppetry art.

Another example of a show where words are useless, here using even more simple puppets, abstract shapes becoming concrete and alive through exquisite manipulation. *BOIS* is the latest performance of Puzzle Theatre, a Montreal company founded by two artists coming from Eastern Europe: Pavla Mano and Csaba Raduli. Together, they create shows mostly without words, always using

simple materials. For *BOIS*, they used pieces of fallen tree branches to create a story of envy, bringing to life a whole family of bizarre characters, involved in a quest of reaching and owning the single leaf left on a tree, until their greed makes their whole world fall apart! The many protagonists are all different from one another, have different personalities because of their shape but mostly because of their delightful manipulation. Here, we must stress the professional Eastern European training which underlines and make such a performance possible and a success. In 40 minutes, both puppeteers attract the young and old spectators in a poetic and humorous journey, addressing questions about greed, envy, stupidity... and the dramaturgy is clear, bringing the imagination of each spectator along with them through the plot and to its disclosure.

All forms of fictions address our imagination, but here, with the example of *BOIS*, the power of puppetry clearly calls back to animism, according things to have a soul, analogous to the our own... These souls do not use words to communicate with us and thus the power and evident link with puppetry. In this unique acceptance of bringing an inanimate object to life, shared both by the performer and by the spectator, we believe in the proposed drama. This belief calls upon our imagination first, our intellect second. Then may come the words...

The dramaturgy of *BOIS* is clear and efficient. A booklet cannot render or continue the spectator's fun or admiration of the performance... only a few souvenir pictures, distributed at the end of the show, will recall the experience. https://vimeo.com/671509685?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=5897848

As a third example of successful dramaturgy without words, I choose to present the performance of an artist using one single elaborate puppet of a chimpanzee, very well built and manipulated by three puppeteers. It differs from the two previous examples because of the very life-like scale of the puppet and its realistic looks.

Designed and directed by Nick Lehane from New York, *CHIMPANZEE* is based on true events about an aging, isolated female chimpanzee, secluded in a

cage in a cold laboratory after being raised with a human family for experimental purposes. Sometimes bleak, sometimes beautiful, it's a meticulous, deeply felt nonverbal memory. Expertly manipulated by three puppeteers, the puppet is moving on a simple table, where refined lighting and a very strong soundscape create all the different settings, going from the laboratory to numerous flashbacks of her life in her loving family. The elaborate scenic lighting and sound design really accompany the story and play a major role in the unveiling of the dramaturgy and the end climax. A perfect example of movement, sound, material, and new technologies serving the dramaturgy. Text is superfluous, as it is when listening to an animal to understand its feelings, moods and thoughts.

I will finish my allocution about DRAMATURGY WITHOUT TEXT, with a show with text, but in a foreign language... Working on this allocution, this example sprung to my mind as a probing illustration of excellent puppetry dramaturgy whose impact surpassed the language barrier.

MISTERIA BUFFA, by Dario Fo, was created in 1990 by DRAK Theatre, directed by Jan Borna, with two of their leading actors Vladimír Marek and Václav Poul. Programmed in the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières in 1991, it remains as one of my best experiences of a puppet performance. Although I could not understand a word of the show performed in Czech, I remember being seated on the tip of my chair, for 45 minutes, grasping the whole story and the evoked sentiments, remembering this performance as a turning point in my love of puppet performances. Here, there were words, but not intelligible for me. Still, the dramaturgy was still limpid, "indicible"... The excellence of artists, puppets, sound and design made it happen.

I hope this short allocution will attest my admiration for puppet theatre directors who have this immensurable talent to stay acute to matter, sounds, movements, artists and sometimes text, to convey a story, a meaning and challenge the imagination and the intelligence of the spectators.

The theatre director, creating and teaching: A provocation reflecting on puppet theatre directing, the director's tools, teaching and training philosophy in contemporary puppet theatre

IRINA NICULESCU

Irina Niculescu is a theatre director and teacher. MFA in directing, DAMU (Divadelní Akademie Muzických Umění), Karlova Universita, Prague, Czech Republic, magna cum laude diploma, director at the Tandarica Theater, Bucharest, Romania, 1976-84, creator of the theatre training program specializing in the arts of puppetry, director and teacher at Riksteatret, Oslo, Norway, 1986 -1990, associate director, Théâtre Marionnettes de Genève, Switzerland, 1990-2002, founder of Carte Blanche - Compagnie Irina Niculescu, Switzerland/USA 2001 to present, former vice-president of UNIMA-USA, initiator and co-director of the 3 UNIMA International Conferences on Training in the Puppetry Arts 2015-2019. Creation of many shows using all forms of puppet theater including: actors, musicians, opera singers, dancers and new technologies; teaches directing and interpretation with puppets around the world (Romania, France, Belgium, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Canada, United States, Argentina, Taiwan, India, etc.

Abstract. What kind of stage director training are we planning for the future?

What training philosophy/philosophies while teaching stage directing for a theatre addressing the contemporary public, for whom the “digital magic” is a common toy?

What is the director's tool box in contemporary puppet theatre?

Is the search for meaning one of the tools?

How do we transmit the tools?

What techniques to teach? What media?

Why puppets if puppets at all?

What are the challenges we face today while teaching directing?

Keywords: Theatre directing, puppetry, teaching, creative process, contemporary public.

The theatrical context; my roots.

I believe that theatre training including director's training in contemporary puppetry has to evolve in order to be able to respond to the artists' needs and give them the tools and the guidance to accomplish the theatre they want to create. I am a theatre director. I tell stories about the human soul. My shows express and share with the public my reflections on life; my joy, my questions, my fears and utopias. I invite poets, writers, painters and sculptors to accompany me in these adventures. For me, the puppet has a tragi-comic essence, because it is always linked to the visible or invisible hands and body of the manipulator. It is a metaphor for the human condition. The act of manipulation and the interdependence of the puppeteer and the puppet contribute to the double effect of innocence and irreverence that the puppet exerts on us with so much charm. The puppet has an extraordinary power of evocation. It exists on the fragile border between the animate and the inanimate. It leads us into a fiction that becomes more real than reality.

Create, teach

As a young director, I explored in depth the essence of different types of puppets and their specific dramaturgy. I sought to discover what makes the charm of the puppet, its mystery and strength, and what is the connection between each genre of Puppet Theater and its privileged dramatic territory. My theatrical adventure began in the mid-seventies.

I belong to the generation of creators who brought the puppet out of the "booth" and placed it in the open space next to the puppeteer. This change has been essential in the theater revival; it generated an exuberant creative energy.

Another approach to the design of the space and subsequently, of lighting, another look at the ratio of proportions. Raw material and building materials have been rediscovered and chosen for their dramatic potential. The relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer became suddenly visible and gained new meanings that had to be defined. Artists started to explore new theatrical possibilities playing with objects, materials, and shapes. This creative breath stimulated the imagination and enriched the means of expression: another approach to writing for theatre, new challenges for staging and performing multiplied the dramaturgical forms.

To cope with the new demands, the directors changed the status of the puppeteer, who became an open stage performer mastering multiple skills such as acting, dance, and music, a variety of traditional techniques as well as the ability to invent new puppets, new techniques and technologies. **A unique professional training method has never really existed.** It has been the director who influenced the changes in puppetry training because he/she needed performers, designers, writers, and the technical support capable to help accomplish the director's vision. I will mention only a few of the directors who contributed to open the borders of puppet theatre and influenced several generations of artists: **Yves Joly**, French artist who was a poet, painter, and innovator of puppet theatre, maybe the first artist who used hands and objects as characters; **Philippe Genty**, another French artist who started with puppet cabaret shows and later changed completely his poetic perspective, started to investigate the human dreams and anxieties and invented performances combining a diversity of puppetry forms with dancers, puppeteers, brute materials – in his work the image became the main significant element; **Henk Boerwinkel**, with his miniature puppets and existential reveries,

Josef Krofta whose philosophical thinking and playfulness led him to explore in depth the relation between the puppet and the puppeteer giving it a significant role; he used space as a metaphor and he was an inspiring and provoking director; **Peter Schuman** who used the poetry of brute materials,

reinvented thematic pageantry, and whose *Bread and Puppet Circus* gathered in one weekend twenty thousand people; **Ilka Schonbein**, who has been diving into the deepest waters of human existence, created characters using her body and the body mask in ways unseen before her and told stories about the human condition. Not to mention the many other artists who nourished each other's work and marked our imaginary profoundly.

The status of the puppet

In the midst of this tumult the puppet also underwent many changes of status and appearance. It moved from creating diverse representations of humans, animals and nature to using objects of utilitarian inspiration such as tools, articles of clothing, various materials chosen for their theatrical qualities, hand held masks combined with the body, to mention only a few forms.

In 2008, at my first meeting with the students of the Contemporary Puppet Theater Training Program (DESS) at the University of Quebec in Montreal, a student asked me “*what do we call puppets and puppetry nowadays?*” This essential question pointed to the multitude of contemporary forms, produced by an overflowing, almost obsessive inventiveness, that sometimes is close to forget the quality of the puppet as metaphor and it deprives it of its substance. I was surprised by the relevance of this question. Of course, a single definition is not possible. So, I answered her what puppets and Puppet Theater meant to me.

International meetings on training in the arts of puppetry.

This question along with questions related to the diversity of the training structures – long term, short term, formal and alternative - inspired the idea of organizing together with the **UNIMA Training Commission**, a series of international meetings on training in the arts of puppetry, in order to address them with colleagues from different countries and cultural regions of the world.

Three international meetings with attendance from over 25 countries took place in, France, Romania and Brazil.

After discussing the definition of “puppet” and “puppetry” in 2015, the pedagogy and the links between traditional and contemporary puppet theater in 2017, the third international meeting, examined different aspects of the current notion of directing:

- How to define the director? Because its functions differ and are not definitive.
- How to teach staging? What staging? For which theater?
- What could be the appropriate pedagogy for a constantly moving puppet theater? It should be known that today the puppet is born of a profusion of contemporary forms, produced with an overflowing inventiveness: how should we approach staging and how should we teach it?

Is « puppet theatre directing » a special category of theatre directing?

I don't think so!

The theatre director is a conceptual artist: an architect and a poet. Our work is to build live performances, which express important ideas about life, about us, and our world. We are all seeking the secret and mysterious forces that rule theater. We are always drawn by two forces: **inspiration and mastery**. Our means of expression are not different from actors' theatre; if we use puppets, shadow puppetry, masks or animated objects, and digital imagery we have to give them a theatrical identity and dramaturgical function. We always need an important story to tell. **Adolphe Apia** laid the foundations of modern theatre practice in the first part of the 20th century. He stated that **the director must work experimentally and as much as he can, he must play with his scenic materials**. The director must be like a conductor, his effect must be magnetic,

like that of a conductor. He has transformed theatre in what he called a “supreme union of all the arts”.

Almost at the same time, **Gordon Craig** wrote: “The art of theater is neither the performance of the actor nor a play, nor a scene nor a dance, it consists of all these elements... The theater of the future will be a theater of visions, not a theater of declarations...an art that says less and shows more than all the others; an art that is simple to understand for all, through its senses and feelings, an art that is born of movement, movement that is the very symbol of life}.

I studied directing at the Academy of Theatre Arts in Prague - at the chair of puppetry called today “Puppetry and alternative theatre”. Our curriculum was the curriculum of theatre directing and dramaturgy of “actors theatre” to which were added courses of all types of puppetry and technology. Puppetry came on top of the studies of dramaturgy, theatre aesthetics, history, fine arts, music, acting, improvisation, mask theatre and so on. It was a very intense 4-year program. It was an in-depth program which I consider still valuable. But that program is not covering all the contemporary needs and expectations. It didn’t cover them at that time either. It was marked by rules and patterns. As students, we had many other things we would have liked to approach because we discovered that we had different ways to start the creative process. Nevertheless, it was a time to accumulate a lot of knowledge and learn about ourselves. I experimented a lot with my colleagues.

Going home I founded in Tandarica Theatre in Bucharest an experimental laboratory. This is where I invented myself as a director.

What does a theatre director need to know in order to use puppets as an important means of expression

I believe that one of the most important work is to explore the theatrical essence of each type of puppets, both traditional and contemporary, its dynamic,

its proportion and the ratio between the puppet and the human being, the dramatic potential which stands in its relation with the space. To discover the emotional impact of each kind of puppet on the public and what determines it. To unleash the puppet dramatic strength and make it so that it surprises the spectators.

Professional training

The diversity of artistic concepts determined the necessity of a variety of training formats: university programs with diplomas, independent theater schools, workshops, master classes, and training within theater companies. Each type of training points to a particular a vision of theater, a certain conception of “puppetry” and “Puppet Theater” and corresponds to a certain philosophy of education.

What are the objectives of the different types of training programs? Whom do we want to teach? What are the challenges of the current programs, our successes and failures, our doubts, our questioning? How do we define puppetry and Puppet Theater today? As artists, we may address these questions through the act of making theatre. As pedagogues we have to formulate clear answers, which enable us to have a clear teaching philosophy and methodology. Of course, in theatre the answers cannot be definitive. Theatre is in permanent movement and like the other arts, it is in intimate relation with the social, economic, and philosophical movement.

Does the theatre director have tools he/she can transmit?

Definitely. But we need to have a clear vision of what we want to transmit, to whom, how, for what goal, and to be open to adapt it to the students while we are guiding them to their goal. Early in my theatre journey I was invited to teach directing and performing with puppets. First as an assistant professor at the Institute of Theatre and Cinematographic Arts (IATC, today UNATC), where I worked for four years; later on, in many countries of Europe, USA, Canada,

Argentina, Taiwan, India... in universities, theatre schools, alternative programs, and workshops. When I started teaching, I already had my own experience in different creative processes and I believed in the importance of this diversity.

I consider myself more of a “thinking educator” than a pedagogue. Why? My main goal is to work on the development of the concept of staging. It is less a matter of teaching a truth than of transmitting the means to affirm one. The important thing is to introduce students to the means that will enable them to express their subjectivity through theatre. Of course, I formulated my teaching philosophy and way of transmitting the director’s tools. But I base my teaching on the continuous movement and not on the stability of values. I combine training and creation. I transmit the director’s “construction tools” of a show through formulating the main questions a director has to answer in different stages of the creation of a show.

In addition to the indispensable technical approach, I propose a perspective of self-construction, a way of being. But this process remains unacknowledged and the student continues to form himself by decoding it, which takes time. The students will find their way step by step. Though I wouldn’t call it a method, because I am adapting it to each new group of students, their experience and their search. Each group is a new challenge.

If Stanislavski was saying in the beginning of the 20th century: « there is no stage director who can produce a piece without first finding the directing idea » this statement expresses only one small part of the broad diversity of creative processes of today. Theater must provide a philosophical reflection of the world, create a collective moment of entertainment, reflection and celebration, it must gather people in a specific event, where there is magic.

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All these and more are questions I would like and hope to debate in a future meeting with colleagues-directors preoccupied by best ways to teach directing in contemporary puppet theatre.

How to write for kids these days – considerations on children literature

RALUCA SAS-MARINESCU

Abstract. Children drama writing, both in literature and in performances occur with the acceptance of the fact that children are different from us. Their world is more sensorial than ours, they get acquainted with the visual much more early than us. From early stages they are used to watch cartoons which develop their visual earlier and in a way we can barely understand. They get satisfaction in a glimpse. That is a reason for hardly accepting theatrical conventions where an actor is giving life to a puppet. Classical stories scares them, colors and sound attract them. Is there a need for story in all this? How should we build that narrative? My hypothesis is that adaptation might work better than a classical story, adaptation understood as a tool to translate values from a past world to a contemporary one.

Keywords: drama writing, children, narrative structure.

Hypothesis background

In Romania, the educational public system, starting from 3 and ending at 18-19 does not have a theatre curricula. In kindergarten kids see puppetry theatre or kids performances once in a year, together with their colleagues, or, in lucky cases, with their parents. And this happens in urban areas. Not all cities have kids dedicated theatres, the vast majority of drama theatres produce one or two performances, every year, dedicated to children with no puppets, but using drama actors in staging stories. But these performances are not based on an

audience research for better understanding the needs of the small audiences, or the differences between a 3 years old and a third grader.

In October 2020 (!) the ministry of education inserted for the first time in the curricula of schools the study of theatre as follows:

- Grades 3 and 4 “Me and the stage” ages 9-10 years
- Grades 6 and 7 “Theatre and us” 12-13 years
- Grades 10-11 “Theatre laboratory” 16-17 years

But, with no qualified teachers for this classes, with no bachelor or master degree programmes dedicated to building up a theatre curricula for this children and with a twist in the law: this classes will be held if the school choses to include them in their offers of optional subjects. But who will teach this classes? And what is the relationship between theatre and children before reaching 9?

New parenting is teaching fresh parents how to handle their kids: a simple google search gives you more than 500,000 answers, from New York Times to dedicated sites that offer you tips, guidelines, advices on what to do and what not to, on which activities to engage you kids in and how to keep children from classical stories because they will get scare too early, too soon.

Children literature changed through the years becoming a very well paid industry.

We can make up a story in no time, in five minute: take an animal that has a few challenges to overcome: finding a place to sleep, finding a friend, getting dressed or even going to the toilet. Get a good illustrator, put one sentences on a page. And there is your book. Finding an editor is not that hard because children books are sold easy, at a medium price of 6-10 euros. Sold easy because they have attractive colours and no conflict.

There are also changes in the way we live our lives: food is bought, not cooked at home, kids have activities in the afternoon because parents are working from 9 to 5/6, children got to school by car. In a study based on a survey, 80% of the parents admitted that the quality time spend with their children is in the car on the road from home to school or back. Arriving at home children have homework, parents are tired, they eventually have a dinner together. In weekends

we have Netflix or HBO to thank for unlimited cartoons or phones, tablets, laptops for gaming. (Note: there is a strong debate between the proper age for introducing children to technology, some argue that the sooner the better because they will be depends on technology as they grow up and new jobs are being created as technology advances; others argue that children should be kept away from technology because of the hard way of working with parental control options)

So, we have:

1. Theatre policies – lack of dedicated programmes – educational programs, workshops, different productions according to age and needs.
2. Educational system – no curricula for theatre classes, no trained professors for optional theatre classes.
3. Differences between urban and rural areas – theatre have a very low presence in the country side because of travelling costs.
3. New parenting based on no conflict and liberal way of raising children
4. No editing filter – proofreading for children books
5. New media and new technologies that take most of our and our children time.

Demonstration

How can a drama writer navigate through all this challenges in order to get a good and effective result?

I will start with an example, a children performance that I have seen a few years ago:

The pink-blue mess, a performance produce by the independent company MiniReactor, directed by Palocsay Kiso-Kata, based on a story by Dorina-Grațiela Aolăriți, adapted for stage by Ana Cucu Popescu. I choose this example because it sustains my hypothesis that adaptations might be one of the best ways of creating drama text for children performances. Let's take a look at a trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vW5QxEqELWw>

In this performance, two children, a boy –and a girl explore the world of colours and mainly the prejudice that we are defined since we are born by this two ways of showing our gender: pink for girls and blue for boys, a prejudice sustained by shops and retailers, but also by the educational system. The two brothers share the toys based on colours, mum and dad are also pink and blue. As a young mother of an almost 4 years old girl I can tell you that it is sometimes hard to find green, orange, or grey dresses. But coming back to the Blue-pink mess, the story goes on with the girl wishing an all pink world, with pink clothes, pink food, pink houses and a pink sun. Her wish comes true and everything she touches becomes pink.

“Midas story and his wish to transform into gold everything he touches is actually the main engine of the story’s narrative structure. Modified to serve the purposes of the play, the idea that a wish once granted can be regretted makes the transfer of the negative value of miser to intolerance”¹

In the end the first status of the characters is regained, the girl overwhelmed by the stereotype gives up her wish and she wins back her family. A hat that appears at the end of the performances gives us the idea that the adventure can go on with different colours.

“The Pink-Blue mess is stakes on the tolerance and acceptance theme, beyond stereotypes and prejudice, but keeps the distance from a moralizing approach, and keeps also an equilibrium of the emotional-objective exposure²”.

As you can see in the photos, the director chooses to work with this colours in terms of scenography and lighting, we have a white world at the beginning of the play that receive colours through the process of the story development. The creative team also chooses to work with dimensions: the kids- puppets are small, the witch-puppet that grants wishes is tall, the parents a big, the house the kids live in is smaller than the witch.

¹ (Silvia Netedu, Despre toleranță și acceptare în teatrul pentru copii - Harababura roz-albastră) - Liternet.ro

² Silvia Netedu, Despre toleranță și acceptare în teatrul pentru copii - Harababura roz-albastră) - Liternet.ro

Aiming both at children and their parents, the performance is made for kids from 3 to 7 and represents, in my opinion, a valid way of using old myths translated into contemporary values, responding to the needs of new parenting.

Another story that I would like to bring to your attentions is *The lion at the library* by Michelle Knudsen, published in 2006. It has all the ingredients of a successful play in 2022: talks about rules and the need to respect them but also the need of breaking them in certain circumstances. It is the story of a lion – that could be a giant puppet and the strange decision to enter a library – a place of quiet and respect.

Let us hear the story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T18NCobS43c>

We can build a giant library, we can have puppets us children and two actors as Mrs Meriweather and Mr McBee.

The contrast between the animal and the space is the main trigger here. And contrast is built on a principle stipulated by Gianni Rodari in his extraordinary Grammar of Fantasy: the fantastic binomial.

Children learn about how the world is according to their parents system of values and according to the stories they are exposed to. The fantastic binomial will draw their attention and raise their curiosity mainly because is something they never found in their small world.

Conclusions

Old stories should be translated into the new world values through adaptations that take into consideration the different ways of reception of a story. This can be achieved through research studies dedicated to young audiences together with a better financial aid given to children theatre in order to have a bigger mobility in reaching audiences and a budget for founding drama writers and copyrights. And also a dedicated curricula in theatre faculties that should give students the tools to adapt and create colourful worlds for children, using sensorial as the main milieu of communicating a story.

I argue for this way of seeing things mainly because here there are three theatre faculties represented at this conference, and beyond acting programmes for puppetry theatre, directing for children classes, I strongly recommend text adaptations classes, understood as ways of translating values and principles of contemporary world into children plays.

Don't get me wrong: I do not reject Snow White, The Wizard of Oz or Red Riding hood, a just say that we need another way of telling this stories. We cannot fight Disney or poorly made theatre, but we can find new ways of engaging audiences by understanding the contemporary world and it's values.

Thank you!

Theatre for toddlers¹; educating the visual and sound perception

VARGA IBOLYA

Director, *Puck* Puppet Theatre Licensed in theatre art, theatre, and puppet theatre directing at the Theatre and Film Academy in Bucharest, in the year of 1996, under the coordination of teachers Mihai Maniutiu, Dragos Galgotiu, Ludmilla Szekely Anton, Cătălina Buzoianu, Cristian Pepino. Over 40 shows directed in puppet theatres and other institutions, the direction of radiophonic plays, stage plays, dramatizations, translations, and articles. Collaborating professor of the Theatre and Film Faculty of the UBB, Cluj (2002 – 2022). Awards: The award for directorial debut – for the direction of the show *Don Cristobal* by F.G. Lorca at the International Puppet and Marionette Festival - Galați, 1996; award for the actor – puppet – music relationship in the show *Hänsel si Gretel*, by Ovidiu Pecican in Collection Shows Festival, Bucharest, December 2008; special award of the jury for the show *Te aştept!* by John Lawson, at Puck International Festival, Cluj, October 2010; The special award of the jury for the direction of the show *Erős János* (János the Strong) by Orbán János Dénes, at Puck International Festival, Cuj, 2012. Most recent shows: *Plüm-Plüm kalandjai* (*The adventures of Plüm-Plüm*), by José Geal, *Puck* Puppet Theatre, Hungarian section, Cluj, 2021; *The Bread Pocket*, by Matei Vișniec, *Puck* Puppet Theatre, Romanian section, Cluj, 2021. **Articles:** *A mai gyermekirodalom és a bábjátszás újító kísérletei I-II-III* (*Contemporary literature for children and experiments in animation theatre*) – articles published in *Művelődés Magazine*, Cluj, 2017, the February, March, April numbers <https://muvelodes.net/szinpad/a-mai-gyermekirodalom-es-a-babjatszas-ujito-kiserletei-3>

Abstract. The theatre for toddlers movement (an applied theatrical movement) first started in Norway, along with the Glitterbird project and the EU project, Small size – Interpretive art for the smallest of us, from Italy. The purpose of these projects was the study of the reception of the theatrical phenomena by children younger than 4 years old and the elaboration of a theatrical language capable of communicating with children aged 1 to 4. During this theatrical research, the artists involved set out to investigate the

reception of the theatrical act, searching for answers to the questions: Which is the specific (primary) ability that makes the accepting/receiving of a performative act possible and which are the abilities that can appear later on, growing up? Can that universal theatrical language, whose ancient grammar is known to all theatrical actants, regardless of their cultural background, be found?

Keywords: theatre for toddlers, puppet theatre, non-verbal theatre, play, theatrical language.

“Following our artistic activity we have come to the conclusion that the children that were brought to theatre shows when they were babies started speaking earlier and had a vaster vocabulary than the children who had been “deprived” of the experience of theatre. This indicated that we have a magical power! It’s also true that with this power, comes great responsibility.” János Novák: To create a new world/ Új világot teremteni/

The appearance of theatre for toddlers¹ or that of shows aimed at children under the age of 3 had extremely practical reasons both in Romania and Hungary. Starting with the 90's, especially at the weekend shows, a new audience emerged: children younger than 4 years old. The unfamiliar space, the unexpected sound and visual effects, the much too big scenography elements were producing anxiety and fear among the smaller children, despite them being accompanied by their parents. Incapable of following the mostly linear storyline of the show, the smaller children would get scared when the lights would turn off and would protest through loud crying or desperate yells whenever a stage intervention would take them by surprise. In repertoire state theatres, you could rarely (if ever) find a show dedicated to children younger than 3. It would often happen that, during a show¹, the youngest members of the audience would be exploring the surroundings, investigating the stage, and under the understanding gaze of their parents, they would run between the actors or, discover the stage lights, they would improvise individual moments, to the delightment of the audience...

In his article – published with the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ASSITEJ¹- János Novák, the artistic director of “Kolibri” Theatre for Children and Youth Budapest declared the following, reflecting upon the theatrical phenomena called “theatre for toddlers”: “At that time, artists and psychologists thought that the age of children who can be brought to the theatre should be at least 3 or 4, considering that children younger than that could be affected negatively by a premature experience. Our first personal experiences have changed our minds. Fortunately, we were a part of that first wave, when the movement was still forming, when theatre for smaller children had become a trend in the entire Europe (...). Roberto Franetti, the manager of the *La Baracca* Theatre from Bologna – where they were staging shows for very young children even since the 80’s – at one point declared the following: *The silence of intense focus is that miracle with which the artist can meet only in theatre shows for toddlers*. The term “theatre for toddlers” helped us clarify the following: yes, we are thinking of the youngest of us and yes, this is a new theatre genre”² Of course, the question arises: how much can a child with the age between one and three be considered conscious spectator and how much can he interact with the artistic act?

An attempt at the definition of theatre for toddlers

The first personal impressions upon the viewing of the shows *Toda – the miracle, in children’s language!* (*Toda - a csoda gyereknyelven!*) and *The Tramp* (*A tekergő*) – shows inspired by the poetry of Ottó Orbán – at the “Kolibri” Theatre in Budapest, in 2014, were definitory experiences. Firstly, these shows convinced me that you could communicate through theatre to very young children. From that point forward, I accepted that there is a subgenre of theatre dedicated to children with the ages between 1 and 3. Although it make use of theatrical means, theatre destined for very young children captures the exact moment of transcendence from playing to an actual show. In the time and space

¹ ASSITEJ - Asociația Internațională de Teatru pentru Copii și Tineret.

destined for playing, an understanding of theatrical communication (the convention, as formulated by Johan Huizinga) comes to exist. It is throughout this pact that the child comes to understand in the first minutes of the show that the actor is his playmate, but also an adult who is telling him a story and showing him remarkable things. The child will never renounce his freedom to intervene – as a playmate – in the theatrical act, but will also accept the observant/ spectator status. This simultaneity maintains the balance of perpetual communication between the actants, the fragile balance that supports this genre of theatre. The achievement of finding theatrical and non-theatrical solutions to constantly keep the attention of young spectators shines a light on the abilities and special psychological qualities of the actors. A theatre show for children under the age of three isn't necessarily based on a linear narrative. The action isn't centered around one story, but around a series of shorter stories with tiny beings, closer to the children (represented through toys, random objects, clothing pieces, flowers, stuffed animals, or geometrical figures) or stories starring family members. The lines in the show are often sung or accompanied by musical instruments. There are cases when the texture of the stage play is woven from short poems, rhymes and simple verbal improvisations (or non-verbal, with characters who express themselves through onomatopoeia) – all of them having been adapted to the on stage action, which in the case of children under 3 is very similar to actual playtime, the one they are used to having with their parents. The shows destined for very young children are generally not designed for theatre halls. Small, familiar spaces, that remind the children of the ambiance of a home are preferred to the image of the backstage or that of the black walls. The decorator uses soft textures, natural materials, favouring warm, light colours, pastels and simple shapes. A diffuse light creeps in the space destined for the audience, the accents and lighting effects on the stage being very moderate. During the show, any type of rash intervention (technical or acting wise) is to be avoided. The actor's performance is direct, familiar, but very restrained. Any type of impetuous manifestation is to be avoided. Actors and playmates at the same time, the artists pay attention to each child and adjust the dynamic of the representation to the

psychological availability of the children, in order for them to be able to take the time to contemplate and understand the meaning of what is being shown to them. “The magic”² of theatre takes place gradually: the cubes, the pillows, the textures, and the objects come to life, and the stage becomes a special space in which the movement, the music, and the poetry, direct the children’s attention for the first time towards the performers. But in this theatrical act, there is something different, something entirely special: the children, the parents, and the performers for a circle all during the performance, a circle of protective love, a circle where *everything is all right. Don’t cry, everything is all right* - say the mothers when they try to calm down their babies, invoking a transcendental order that protects us all. When *everything is all right* all the participants to the show perceive the playing as a brotherly meal, as a communion in love. According to director Olga Barabás², the first step in making a theatre show for toddlers is to forget your own artistic ambitions: “Here, the concept is not that important, but what is truly important are good taste, clean thought, the intention, and the acting. Therefore, what you end up showing to the children is playful, sunny, colourful... We wanted to create something that you prepare secretly, in time, like a gift. In a way, we offer this show like it was a gift. We have thought of those elements that would draw the attention of the younger children, we thought of the colours, of the shapes, of the space, of the atmosphere of the show. During the representation, which doesn’t last longer than 25 minutes, it is never fully dark. In the end, we invite the children into a corner filled with toys, where they can play together with the actors with the objects used in the show(...).”

The length of shows for very young children is adapted to their attention span: there are four to five micro-stories linked among each other, with the average duration of 20 to 30 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of playtime. If the show doesn’t last for longer than half an hour, if it’s never completely dark and the children who wander away from their parents have enough time to get back to them, if there aren’t any strong visual and sound effects and after the show the

² Ariel Theatre, Târgu-Mureş.

children can rediscover, through games, the objects used in the show, then we've probably taken part in a theatre show for toddlers.

In 2005, as part of the project *Glitterbird – art for the youngest of children* (*Glitterbird – művészet a legkisebbeknek*)³, Kolibri Theatre from Budapest was the first institution to present a theatre show for toddlers (titled *Toda*). In the following years, in Hungary, more theatres adhered to project *Glitterbird*, among which the Bozsik Yvette Company, who put together a show based on music and dance (*Négy évszak/ The four seasons*) and Szkéné Theatre, where director and coreographer Attila Rácz, staged some games inspired by Hungarian folkloric traditions (*Erdön, mezön, udvaron/Through the woods, fields and yard*). The success of these shows and, implicitly, the success of this new theatrical genre is confirmed by the show's longevity: all the titles mentioned above were maintained for years on end in the repertoires of the companies. János Novák, summing up the results of project *Glitterbird* said the following: "After the first encounters with the audience we had the opportunity to introduce changes to the shows. The fact that these shows are valid to this day is the result of the longer rehearsal process, which was also based on experimentation." During this research, the artists involved set out to investigate the reception of the theatrical act, looking for answers to the question: *Which is the specific (primary) ability that makes the accepting/receipting a performative act possible, and which are the abilities that can appear later on, growing up? Can that universal theatrical language, whose ancient grammar is known to all theatrical actants, regardless of their cultural background, be found?*

Non-verbal language in theatre for toddlers

The non-verbal language of theatre first appeared along with the fair puppeteers from the XVth century and continues to be present today on Europe's marionette stages. In Romanian theatres, starting in the 90s and up to the present

³ <http://www.dansdesign.com/gb/hungary/artists.html>

day, various non-verbal adaptations have been staged, among which parodies with puppets, exam shows or canonized fairytales from classical literature.

One of the characteristics of puppet theatre is its deficiency when it comes to excessive verbalization

It is for this reason that non-verbal language can be a directorial option to refuse old and tired stage plays or theistic or too didactical inheritances. Sometimes, theatre managers encourage non-verbal productions with the hopes that they could later subscribe them to the international circuit. But, usually, the option for a non-verbal show is gladly embraced by the children's theatre directors as well. This is also the case of the animation study-show brought to life by the students of the Theatre and Film Faculty from Cluj, under the coordination of professor Palocsay Kisó Kata, titled *Plastic(Műanyag)*, in the school year 2011-2012. The lack of words encouraged the students to heighten the other elements which make up the language of theatre: the show communicated through a long line of images that were deconstructed, only to be put together once again, just like in the case of sand animation. The pile of plastic objects – in and of themselves very intrusive, suffocating waste – was transforming into anthropomorphic bodies or imaginary beings, who then became very funny and charming characters... The object animation fascinated the very young children (in a representation of this show that took place at Puck Puppet Theatre), especially when the actors managed to sustain the ambivalent use of the elements: the objects turned into complex characters, so that the signified something other than what they were, but by giving them their usual function back, their turned back to themselves. I consider this show to be an exception. In the majority of cases, non-verbal language does not lead to unsettling theatre experiments and for this reason non-verbal productions have lost their exotic shine from back in the day. One of the most memorable experiments of the 50's, *The paper tragedy* by Yves Joly⁴, became an anthological event, managing to keep alive the memory of a poetical moment of rare beauty

from puppet theatre history: the burning of the silhouettes cropped out of paper of the two lovers – the love story was embodied by the fleeing nature of the material...

Non-verbal theatre appeals to the spectator's availability and ability to receive the show through the means of images, through movement, through rhythm and sound signs, other than words. On the other hand, it takes advantage of the communication value of the gesture, of the human body, of objects and props, returning to the ritualistic character of theatre.

The theatrical research looking for new ways to communicate to very small children continued at Kolibri Theatre even after the success seen by the shows *Toda* and *The Tramp*. In 2013, the theatre's manager, János Novák, invited director Barbara Kölling, a renowned artist of the Helios Theater Company from Hamm, to stage a non-verbal production for very young children. And this is how the show *Dot. Semicolon (Pont, pont, vesszőcske)*⁴ came to be, legitimizing once again the existence of shows addressed to this audience. “*We relate to both children and grown-ups how the world was built from clay and branches. The creators are three actors and a musician*” – announced the theatre's web page. The use of clay and wood was nothing new, but the show promised a break from past productions. The play bill invited the audience to take part in the game of the “making of the world”, setting very high expectations of answers to the questions: *How did the world come to exist? What existed first? Was it light, water or the word? Or maybe it was a ball? Or maybe many balls? And what came after? A branch, a rock, a dot, a semicolon...*⁵ The recommended age for this show when it first opened was between 1 and 3 years old, but it later changed to 2 to 5. Unlike shows in which the text (usually written in lyrics) ensures the base structure of the directorial concept, *Dot, semicolon* is based on the investigation of the playful possibilities offered by the actor's craft while trying to trans hypostatize matter: “*Dot, semicolon* is a clean show that makes moderate use of classical theatrical means: it is the theatre of returning to the basic elements. We can consider this

⁴ An online version.

*approach to be the director's signature, as she has shined a light on elements such as wood, water or paper in her previous shows. At the end of the day, the actors involved (Bea Tisza, Dániel Czupi, Szabolcs Ruszina) create a new world made out of clay and wood*⁵ - Andrea Rádai, about the show, in "Revisor" Magazine.

Even though, during the show, various games with the clay, the branches, and the sticks are exhausted – the actors mold the clay in all the ways possible, they make figures that remind us of the human body, they make masks, and then bring them to life, they chirp, whistle, puff, whisper and make up all kinds of sounds – magic doesn't manage to appear, the children are not part of their games. Despite the stimulating actions and the suggestive acting, the tools used by the show become dull and it gets to the point where not even the interactive elements towards the end of the show are not able to salvage the audience's attention. *Where the language and the stage means of the show are concerned, "Dot, semicolon" is still somewhat formal when compared to other theatre shows for toddlers. The lining of the stage situations are clearer: the distance between the actors and the audience is bigger; the world belonging to the stage is untouchable. This becomes obvious also from the fact that during this show, the children aren't moving around from one place to another and the room is submerged in complete darkness. It could also be because of the white, sterile costumes worn by the actors, which look almost like uniforms, but the atmosphere is less friendly, less familiar (...), and during the actual show, the ambiance turns explicitly cold.*⁶ For the adult audience member, the show offers more than one level of meaning to be decrypted, from the mystery games about Genesis, to the metamorphosis of the matter: the normal, lifeless state of the clay accentuating the dramatic birth of life and revealing the essence of animation theatre.

In spite of their apparent simplicity and wide spreading, theatre shows for toddlers are not necessarily success stories. In the online publication *Apapara, Cultural gazzette (Kultúrtárca)*, I found the writings of a critic who participated

⁵ <http://revizoronline.com/hu/cikk/4699/pont-pont-vesszocske-kolibri-szinhaz/>

⁶ *Ibid.*

in a theatre show for toddlers and later shared his impressions under the pseudonym of *Daddy (Apu)*. This is a quote from the published text:

"The idea of forming a theatre group made out of teachers and amateur actors seems good to me. Such a group could present normative, slightly moralizing stories with the help of guitars, music, and handmade objects. In this specific case, the play rules were communicated to the audience in Parksarok (cultural space), where there was no heating and the prices were spicy, to say the least (...). I watched amazed at the enthusiasm of the actors, who were covering their arms with socks and gloves, trying to show us something slightly perverse, something that I don't even know what it meant. Every once in a while, in order to pass the time, they would produce this countdown, which they would repeat endlessly with the help of the children, that kept ringing in my head weeks on end afterwards: "Apaťukafundaluka"⁷

(translated by Ana Cucu Popescu)

⁷ Theatre for toddlers, Kezeslásás company: cultural page of web Apapara, about the show *Játszótér* <http://www.apapara.hu/2014/02/kulturtarca.html>

Puppetry at the crossroad of arts

DANIELA VARTIC

Daniela Vartic is the artistic consultant of *Puck* Puppet Theatre, and the coordinator of *Puck* International Festival and programmer of *WonderPuck* Street Festival in Cluj-Napoca. She is the author of *Professional Puppet Theatre in Cluj/ 70 years of Professional Puppet Theatre in Cluj* monograph, and the coordinator of the Romanian edition of *Kovács Ildikó, puppet theatre director* monograph. In 2022, together with Raluca Sas-Marinescu, from Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Theatre and Film, organized the first edition of *Puck Conferences with Puppetry and Literature*. The second edition of *Puck Conferences (October 2023)* includes scholars and professionals in puppetry training and education.

Abstract. Puppetry has the privilege to initiate young audiences in different forms of art: literature, visual art, and music meet on the stage in front of children's eyes and leave traces in the cultural background and artistic taste of future adults. Therefore, puppet theatre is not a mere 'casual meeting' with the public, but it carries a formatting responsibility for the societal cultural foundation. The level of assuming this subtle educative role determines the quality and appropriateness of the shows addressing children of any age. "A society that does not enjoy the charm of the puppet theatre, the charm of the story, of the fairy tale, acted out and represented on stage, which leads to the stimulation, the incitement of the child's imagination, the joy of being, of judging, of sanctioning or applauding good, does not exist" prof. Ion Vlad, former artistic assistant at Cluj Puppet Theatre.

Keywords: Theatrical fairy-tales, young audience, spectacular memory, acting codes, stories.

Puppetry at the Crossroad of Arts

Case study on the theatrical fairy-tale series directed by Mona Marian Chirilă, after Carlo Gozzi's works at Puck Theatre, between 2005 and 2012.

The Wizard and the Raven, The King Stag, and The Love of the Three Oranges are the three productions realized as theatrical research on the spectacular energy sources that bring on the stage valuable texts, visual art, music, and acting. The long-lasting interest, the academic and didactic research on the poetics of *commedia dell'arte*, and on the special energy of this type of performance brought Mona Marian to the point that she could experiment innovative rules and techniques in puppetry.

Starting from Carlo Gozzi's plays she adapted not just a dialectal theatrical language but an entire spectacular tradition including visual and acting codes, in a visionary attempt to discover new forms of comedy.

The starting idea of the series came in 2002 when Mona Marian Chirilă became manager of *Puck* Theatre and she raised the problem of the real impact of puppet performances on the long-term formation of the young public. She stated then that puppet performances have to leave a trace in the kids' spectacular memory. As well, this task was to educate the taste for certain details of the stories, the visual elements – settings, puppets, objects, costumes, lights – the music, and acting. She assumed and projected that the multitude of signs condensed in her shows will impact on a subtle level of perception of the young audience.

The series was previously announced by several noticeable performances created since Mona Marian Chirilă graduated from the Theatre Institute *I.L. Caragiale* in Bucharest in 1987. One of them was the performance ***Everlasting Youth and Endless Life*** created at *Puck* Puppet Theatre in 1995. The hero is evolving in the spectacular background suggesting the special gift he gained when he was born: to live an everlasting youth in a realm of fairies. He travels between the real world and the fairies' realm with the help of some 'fantastic' characters where he gains immortality. He is attracted back with some undefined feelings of

missing his native places and he finally turns back to his fellows. His way back is a quick transformation of the hero, and when he finally gets back to his home, he is 'welcomed' by death itself. The artistic key in creating the show was to discover and integrate some rare texts from folk Romanian traditions (incantations, spells, and enchantments), some special live musical instruments played on the stage, in the shape of a well-known folk tale. This performance gathered refined sounds, texts, images, and delicate handling of puppets, to reinterpret valuable folkloric traditions and reshape a tale of great significance in Romanian culture.



After several years of didactic experience in artistic directing, Mona Marian Chirilă started a complex project using the means of *commedia dell'arte* in puppet theatre, combining wayang puppets with masks and actors and bringing Italian classical texts on the stage of Puck Theatre. The first choice was Carlo Gozzi, with his theatrical fairy tales that were initially meant to revive the traditional *commedia dell'arte* in the Italian culture of the 18th century. The magical and fantastic insertions in Gozzi's plays fitted the director's goal to adapt classical stories and address children and parents at different levels of understanding.

Eugenia Tărășescu Jianu, a scenographer with a very rich experience who collaborated on many artistic projects with Mona Marian Chirilă, designed the visual elements that composed the stage. The settings were simple and functional with detailed painted and sculptured elements. The puppets, the masks, and the costumes respected the historical tradition in representing the *commedia dell'arte*

characters: *Pulcinella* and *Mezzetino* were costumed actors, and the rest of the characters, were puppets designed to follow all the traditional codes of representation.

Corina Sirbu, a specialist in music history, adapted the music and collated southern Italian traditional music, the well-known tarantellas, to contribute to the spectacular energy.

The Wizard and the Raven (produced in 2005) was the first project introducing the wayang puppets in Gozzi's play accompanied by costumed actors (Norando – the wizard, *Pulcinella* and *Mezzetino*). This is a story of a wizard who casts a spell on the prince who hunts his crow. From this point forward, everything gets crazy, and, on the shape of a theatrical fairy tale, things are mastered to a happy ending by wizard Norando. The two *commedia dell' arte* characters: *Mezzetino* (Dana Bonțidean) and *Pulcinella* (Călin Mureșan), comically assisted and permanently interfered with the story. The result was a dynamic and hilarious performance, enjoyed by children and adults as well. The same characters are the 'amphitryons' of the next two projects: *The King Stag* and *The Love of the Three Oranges*. This was the moment when the project *Nocturne* addressed to high school, college students, and young adults, started at Puck Theatre. This program lately included the young generation of actors with Matei Vișniec's *Old Clown for Hire, How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients, The Body of a Woman as a Battlefield*, directed by Mona Marian Chirilă, and Garcia Lorca's *Don Perlimplin*, directed by Varga Ibolya.



The King Stag/ The Magic Secret (2010/2011) had two versions, one at the Hungarian department, and the other one at the Romanian department of Puck Theatre. Almost all the actors in the two departments were involved in this project, and the show was presented to a specific audience, adolescents and young adults. The performance was played in the *Nocturne* program, too. All the scenes were constructed and gathered a complexity of signs addressing the young public in an attempt to introduce and revive theatrical history for nowadays public. The visual keynote in this performance is different from the previous show, as in *The Wizard and the Raven* where simple chromatic lines of white, black, and red are completed here by the colourful projections on the white paravan. The scenographer Eugenia Tărășescu Jianu imagined a unitary and well-documented setting completed with delicate and complex puppets, costumes and masks. Mezzetino and Pulcinella are the fixed characters, who translate between stories, bringing unity to the series.



The Love of the Three Oranges (2012) closed the trilogy in the same format, in the staging of the best-known play written by Carlo Gozzi. It was a collective work, bringing together all the actors of the Romanian department, and former students of professor Mona Marian: Florina Florian, Florin Suciu, and Silviu Ruști. They had this way the opportunity to bring on the stage, and apply the experience gained in theatre school.

The three performances, related to the previous projects presented on puppet stages and at The National Theatre and Hungarian Theatre in Cluj are part of a theatrical poetics Mona Marian Chirilă originally developed to explore the subtle means and language of puppetry. More than this, the whole theatrical creation explored and integrated ignored landmarks of the collective subconsciousness. “Mona Marian Chirilă’s creation is not dedicated to the audience but to the ‘spectator’, as we have different ways of watching... in a mutual regard”, said Visky András about her performances.

I will conclude with my belief that the presented work, aiming to introduce a classical topic to the cultural background of children through puppet theatre performances is a means that will impact and influence the long-term artistic and aesthetic development of the new generations of audience. The entire project was, in this respect, a reference moment in the evolution of *Puck* Theatre, the actors’ artistic experience, and the audience’s perception.

The architecture of fairytales

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Abstract: Fairy tales, myths, and legends are forms of revealed ancestral memory and cultural background of human history. In this respect, introducing great themes and motifs to the young audience requires special attention according to the targeted public. Architectural details, historical or geographical architectural styles, cultural characteristics or social constructs, the way of living in different circumstances, all that architectural content could be discovered by the early-age audience. Fairy tales introduce to young audiences space-related motives, backgrounds, and links to great cultural themes.

Keywords: Architecture, fairy tales, archetypes, myths, early age audience.

Throughout history, different genres of storytelling like fairytales, folktales, ballads, myths, fables, novels, or movies captured the imagination of children

from around the world. Their universe is shaped by images and information not only from their proximity but also from all the stories seen or heard. They develop or construct a mental model of the world as they grew up, not just acquire knowledge and information, as Jean Piaget says in his theory of cognitive development. (Piaget, Jean *Construction of reality in the child*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957)

Some of the stories are located *once upon a time*, in an undefined past (or future) but in a more detailed place. The first information about architecture could be provided by the stories heard or seen at an early age. Even before the word architecture appears in their vocabulary, children find out about certain architectural features and characteristics that are recurrent as archetypes and motifs as in the few examples presented below. The idea of the archetype is linked with Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, in which "dwell archaic... types - universal images that have existed since the remotest times". (*Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*, Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, Routledge, London and New York, 2016). In this respect, some stories are indeed originated in the remotest times and evolved along societies and their culture, reshaped according to specific moral, religious, and cultural criteria.

Children are seeing the world in different ways and the best way to understand their reasoning is to try to see things from their point of view. This could be easier to say than doing, since all productions addressed to young audiences are made by adult authors. In this process, all kinds of biases are influencing the final result and its impact on the young receptors. The cultural background itself is influencing one attitude or another as in the case of Tolkien and Disney. In the 1930s, when mass culture emerged on the ruins of popular culture, Disney and Tolkien were two antagonistic ways to revitalize the old folklore. For J.R.R. Tolkien, a specialist in old English and Scandinavian philology, Professor at Oxford, the marvelous is a serious affair that touches the sacred through the myth, while for Walt Disney, fairy tales are first and foremost entertainment, and even a show. Beyond the two different approaches, to educate or to entertain, there is also the whole historical and cultural background of the

childhood concept in the occidental part of the world. The way the child was seen and treated during history is a subject of many writings, from the controversial approach of Phillippe Aries in the 50s to a more reasonable contemporary text of Colin Heywood. For Tolkien, 'the child is an adult in the making'; for Disney, 'he/she is an individual in its own right'. (https://world.edu/tolkien-vs-disney-educate-or-entertain/?fbclid=IwAR3Sa5L2Sqvex0320NXC7uA-VVCszkJL9l_0zTVUTFx-W0uCDz2yo_YFheQ)

Pattern spaces and motifs

Entering a forbidden chamber is the key moment of many stories, the turning point of the whole plot. The motif of acting against the interdiction is usually attributed to a female character as in the tale of "**Pandora**", or in Charles Perrault's "**Bluebeard**". The secret room is located in different parts of the house or castle. It could be in the attic, like in some versions of the "**Sleeping Beauty**" and "all folktales featuring a *forbidden-place* motif, the transgression serves as a learning experience rather than as an irreversibly fatal act". (D. L. Ashliman, *Forbidden chambers, Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*, Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, Routledge, London and New York, 2016)

As a distinctive architectural feature, the tower plays a leading role in different religious or historical stories. More than that, it achieved attributes of a moral or educational symbol. In the biblical legend of the Babel tower, it illustrates human vanity, the pointless aim of achieving earthly wealth and power. The height of the building speaks about the owner's power and also about the inaccessibility. It can't be reached from the outside and it could be a prison from the inside. History provides many gruesome facts that took place in such buildings. The legend of St. Barbara, locked in the tower by her father inspired many folktales and fairytales with a similar plot construct. In the iconography pattern that depicts the legend of St. Barbara, there is always a tower in the background, as could be seen in the unfinished work of Jan van Eyck. In popular

fairytales, such as “**Rapunzel**” or mockup contemporary cinema stories like “**Shrek**”, the tower represents an obstacle that is to be overrun by a hero to a *happily ever after ending*.

A castle is the most common architectural feature of fairytales. The image of a castle is also the trademark of Disney productions, it defines in one image the essence of a Disney’s concept of fairytales. This castle is inspired by another subjective and romanticized vision of the past, the Neuschwanstein castle built under the Bavarian ruler from the late 19th century, Ludwig the Second.

A house that reflects the character and personality of the inhabitant is a common feature in literature and movies.

In the brothers Grimm’s story of “**Hänsel and Gretel**”, a house is used as a trap. It is a house made from gingerbread, as deceiving as its owner, the Witch. For the hungry and abandoned children, the appearance of the colorful and cheery house and the witch as an old grandma type, brings the hope of deliverance, nothing far from the truth.

The process of building a house bears many moral lessons in the story of the “**Three Little Pigs**”, written by *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps*. The three brothers proceed with different approaches at the process and the final result of their work, the houses, are the materialized expression of their character. The moral teaching of the story is that hard work pays off, and outlines the character qualities like patience and philanthropy. Only one of the three houses is standing still in front of the assault and protects the little pigs. The house as a fairly refuge is a recurrent motif of the medieval world.

Giovanni Boccaccio’s collection of stories published under the title “**The Decameron**” are told by a group of ten people secluded in an isolated house in a remote place that is considered a last refuge from the plague. They are telling stories in order to pass the time and forget about the perils of the outside world. The house walls are offering merely symbolic protection; a house in this case is a frail human artifact facing an unforeseeable fate. The same motif is represented by an inn in a popular collection of fairytales written by Wilhelm Hauff. In this

case, the danger comes from the darkness of a vast Spessart forest where the travelers are stranded in the interior of the little inn. One of them says that maybe sleeping under a tree could be safer than being trapped between the four thin walls.

Since the animated films captured the audience not only the little ones but of the adults as well, the plot tends to be located in a background that mirrors or mocks up the contemporary ways of living. “**The Flintstones**” and the “**Jetsons**” are one of the first examples of the kind. Portraying modern society, including the architectural background in a way that is not only amusing but that bears moral lessons tends to be very popular with modern animated cinema or television production.

A house that falls and dies like a living creature is portrayed in the story “**The Fall of the House of Usher**”, by Edgar Allan Poe. Even if the story is not meant for children, the motif of the house with a soul (a tormented one) reaches the young audience in at least one production, “**The Monster House**”.

Crossing a bridge is often a challenging action in stories and movies. Besides being a perilous moment in the plot, the bridge crossing has a symbolic and metaphorical significance. As a first threshold to a new world of adventures, in the classic story “**Harap Alb**” by Ion Creangă, the bridge is the place where courage and wit are tested, selecting the only one proper candidate able to go further into the unknown world. The symbols here are related to the connection between places and overcoming fear. Travel, unity, lifeline, change, and meeting point are many other symbolic significances to be found in literature and movies, related to the presence of a bridge. In the common language, the expression “burning the bridge” means that the old ties are cut, and the change is definitive.

In *an attic*, all sorts of mysterious and forgotten things can be found, especially in the attic of a mythical castle like the ones described in fairytales. It is a fascinating space, rarely visited, so under a thick layer of dust, all sort of treasures awaits to be discovered.

A door literally facilitates trespassing from one space to another, but in a metaphorical sense that sometimes means that a door opens a portal to another dimension. It is the case in the “**Chronicles of Narnia**” the series of novels written by C.S. Lewis and in the more recent animated movies “**Monsters Inc.**”

Besides the few examples described above, every story has its own background of data about history, culture, and architecture. Architectural details, historical or geographical architectural styles, cultural characteristics or social constructs, the way of living in different circumstances, all that architectural content could be discovered by the early-age audience. By pointing out some examples of architectural features from popular movies and literature for children, become obvious that the first architectural terms and notions are learned from an early age, and architectural education begins much earlier than the school programs intend, a fact that may imply a specific responsibility from all adult authors.

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Specificity of writing for puppetry

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Representative Plays: Return, 2012, The chair is innocent, 2002, Fish of Wilderness, 2008, Morphiomaniacs, 1995, No More Subscription, 1997

Representative Books: *Collection of Plays*, Sun Wook Hyun vol. 1, 2, 3, 4

Abstract. Why do we watch dramas?

Drama in various puppet shows

Writing puppetry plays is different

Keywords: Drama, puppetry play, dramatic literature, puppet show, script.

Why do we watch dramas?

Many people around the world watch dramas. Plays, puppet shows, musicals, TV shows, and movies - let's call them all 'dramas'. So why do we watch dramas? For what? Just for fun? To see good-looking actors or actresses? What is so interesting about other people's lives? Are they funny? I hope you will find

your own answers to why people watch dramas and (if you are a creator) why you want to create dramas.

How about this answer? Mankind and/or life is basically full of contradictions. We came into this world that we never asked to be born into. And it is a very uneasy way to go through life, from birth to death. Our lives are finite, but we dream of infinity. We are not gods, but we dream of gods. We are full of animal instincts even though we are domesticated. Human beings and their lives are contradictions in themselves! I believe the artistic act stems from this contradiction. I think a sense of missing something comes from our life of contradictions and makes us want to do things and see things. As a result, what we want to see in a drama is what we cannot personally find satisfaction with in real life. However, puppet theater has a slightly different system from the formula of most dramas. There are puppet plays that have an orthodox drama system with lines, but there are also many works that are not specific, are more abstract in nature, and have ambiguous themes. A puppet show takes a slightly different path from other dramas. So, what is it? Sometimes it is both artistic and choreographic. It contains some other components than a text drama that begins and ends with a spoken language.

Drama in various puppet shows

1) Traditional orthodox drama format

① Korea / *My Dear Little Calf*. An adaptation of a famous Korean short story into a puppet show. Actors and puppets are combined in a drama with a basic structure -introduction, development, turn of events, and conclusion.



2) Non-verbal (Movement/Mime/Art/Circus, etc.)

Spain – *Gwangju, a silenced revolution*. This work was submitted to the Chuncheon Puppet Festival's puppet film competition. A Spanish creator made a video based on the tragic incident of the massacre of citizens by soldiers in Gwangju, Korea, in 1980. In this puppet film, the art used to show the people, buildings, and actions becomes the creator's language. It has no words. However, you can still see and feel things from the creator's perspective on the 'Gwangju Democratic Movement'.

Spain – *Good Night*. It is another work submitted to the puppet film competition. It only shows dance-like movements. This Spanish troupe is known for collaborations between modern dance movements and puppets. Movements replace words, as in a dance. We have to read some drama or story within the dances. (Why is the title 'Good Night?')

Hungary - *Budapest Marionette*. Chuncheon Puppet Festival invited this work in 2019. Marionettes perform as a circus troupe and the skill is impressive. Is there drama in the circus? This show displays the same structure as a drama called 'Rising', which gradually goes from an easy technique to a more difficult one. Additionally, this circus show uses dramatic techniques to keep the audience focused.

Korea – *String Show*. A one-person play that won the Grand Prize at Chuncehon Puppet Festival in 2019. Without any lines(words), the actor uses only hands and threads to represent a man and to create a sense of drama in which the man overcomes adversity and achieves something. Humor is an essential tool in drama art. Humor keeps the audience engaged. Without the actor’s movements and hand skills, it would not represent a drama. In the puppet show, hand technique is also an element of the drama!



Korea – *A tree and a boy*. A Non-verbal theater based on ‘*The Giving Tree*’, the world-famous book. Without lines, the story goes from introducing the boy, meeting a flower, meeting a tree, to then meeting a butterfly. The sequence of actions and events should be carefully constructed in a non-dialogue play.

※ We briefly talked about six different types of puppet show. (There may be more forms than these.) Now, what kind of puppet show are you aiming for, and what kind of ‘drama’ are you trying to communicate with the audience in the puppet show? Every creator has a ‘story to tell’ or an intention to ‘show’ something. I want to ask how we should contain that intention in the script. That is probably what makes a puppet show/play different from other more traditional-style plays. It should include so much more than just dialogue.

Writing puppetry plays is different

1) What are the core elements of drama composition?

In a nutshell, the drama should be like this;

① Arouse curiosity and solve it.

② The story of a person (or object). It details what events and emotions the character goes through.

③ To shape an idea (the topic to be discussed) in a form other than language. It can be either artistic or choreographic. The expression itself is a drama. It is possible to show only the process, not the completion, as a drama in a puppet show. The audience will fill in the rest. In the mind of the audience, the story will be complete.

The most crucial principle in drama is <conflict>. It is the essential point that orthodox drama theory emphasizes. It should include conflict to make the audience engage with the story. Drama without conflict is boring. How do you frame the story? When you provide a conflict involving a character, the character will aim to overcome it, and then it becomes the story. In the end, seeing the character try to overcome a given conflict is why we will watch a drama/play.

2) What is different in a puppet show/play?

There are many puppet shows/plays which use dialogue in a drama. However, when you reduce the lines and focus on movement and art, the audience's concentration increases. (Non-verbal theater is a trend these days through the need to communicate with people around the world.) So now, unlike in a play, as a puppet rather than an actor appears on the stage, we have to think about how to write a puppet play.

How can we express art in a puppetry play? Should we collaborate with an illustrator and draw images similar to those in a picture book? (Maybe) We might provide information in the form of stage directions. Describing the core of the character in prose is what a writer aims for. It may be like poetry. For example, the appearance of the puppet in Pinocchio may be different. For each and every writer. You should describe everything in the script. Movement can also be

provided in the form of stage directions. The dance script is often written like a poem, where the choreographers can find and express their movements. However, each artist may describe puppet movements differently, so these should be clearly expressed in the script. It would be a complicated expression, and careful and deep thought should be portrayed.

Whether just a reader or another puppeteer, I believe the puppet show/play script should make the readers imagine art and movement in addition to text drama. A puppet play without artistic or action cues would be a vague and plain story. (Of course, geniuses can find concrete art and movement in that ambiguity.)

The form of a modern puppet show/play has not yet been established in Korea. Each troupe writes and uses puppetry in its own way. Some are more like memos, and some are more like video continuity. Another creator has a script in their head. A puppet script should be shaped differently from existing dramas. It must be printed out so creators can share it, and we can share the puppet show with future generations. Of course, you can watch a video. However, I believe that the images created by text can open up greater possibilities for artists. In Korea, we will continue to research and experiment with the style of this new puppet script. (*)

Specificity of writing for puppetry especially on contemporary Korean puppetry scripts

What puppetry scripts made distinctive from play scripts is that puppetry is composite arts with features of visual art. Therefore, when images are given that the reader's comprehension of the plot is expedited. It has its own language from the movement of puppets and beauty of objects, other than from dialogues.

Dramatic literature deals with play scripts, scenarios, and TV shows. It came from a root called 'drama', contemporary society has been growing various new forms of dramatic literature; such as web toons and web dramas, and various

narrative structures are being cultivated according to the very nature of each medium. Out of those, in what form has the puppetry developed?

In the case of Korea, when puppet shows were aired on TV in the 1960s, scripts were probably needed and become settled. Prior to that era, the manipulators and puppeteers involved in the puppet shows used to direct the show themselves, so the puppetry scripts on that era would have been in the form of a short note; an inaccurate dialogues and directions. The TV puppet show scripts seem to have no distinctive features from the scripts, which is used for the play.

I would like to figure out the form of puppetry scripts towards which they should be directed from now on.



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ISBN: 978-606-37-1950-9